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3

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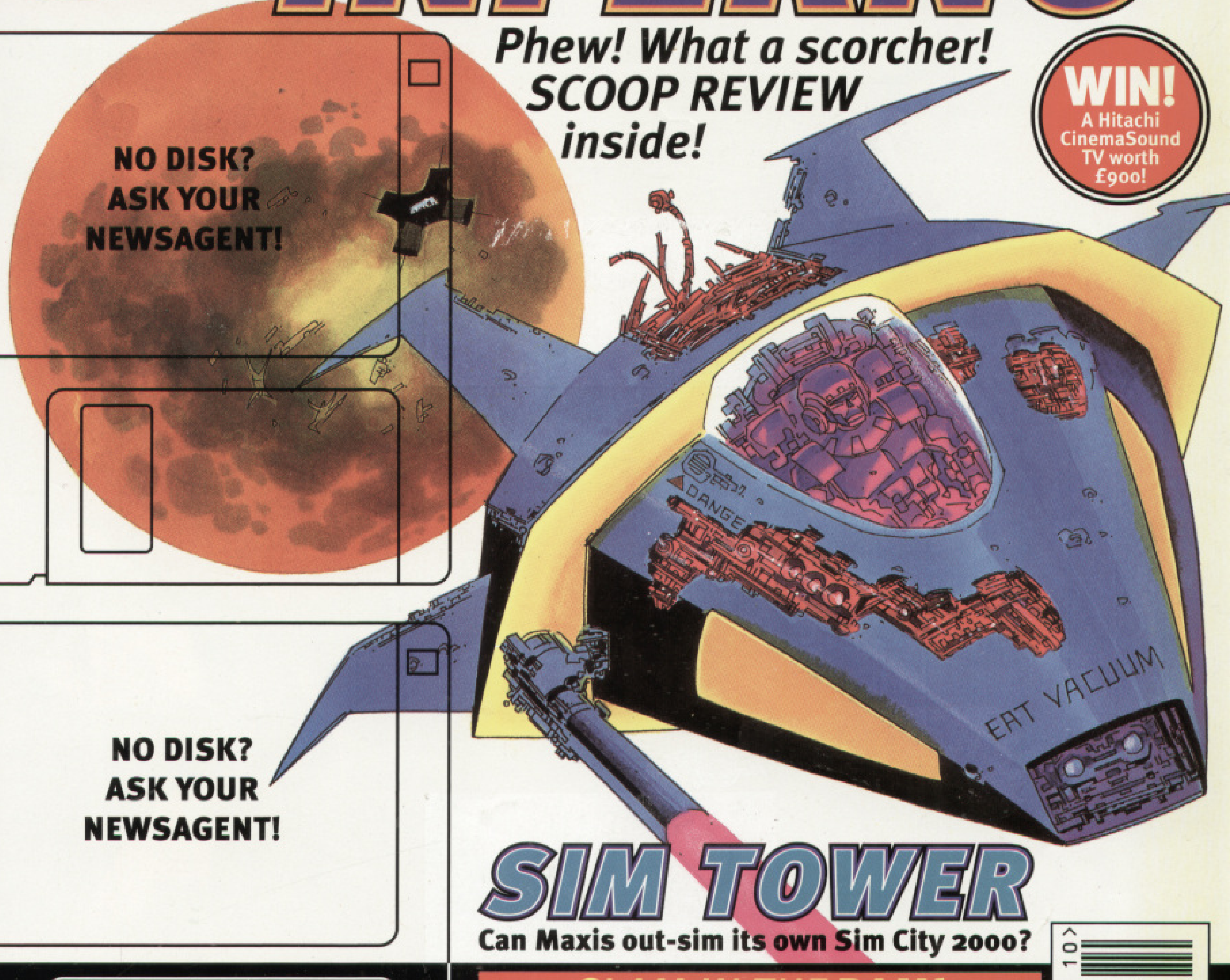
WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

INFERNO

Phew! What a scorcher! SCOOP REVIEW inside!



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SIM TOWER

Can Maxis out-sim its own Sim City 2000?

SLAM IN THE RAM!

How to upgrade your PC's memory — *easily!*

REVIEWED! Outpost ● TIE Fighter ● FIFA Soccer ● Dark Legions ● Heimdall 2 ● Harpoon 2 ● On The Ball ● Battle Bugs ● And more!

PREVIEWED! NASCAR Racing ● Colonization ● Wing Commander 3!

TIPPED! Theme Park ● Al-Qadim ● The Settlers ● And many more!

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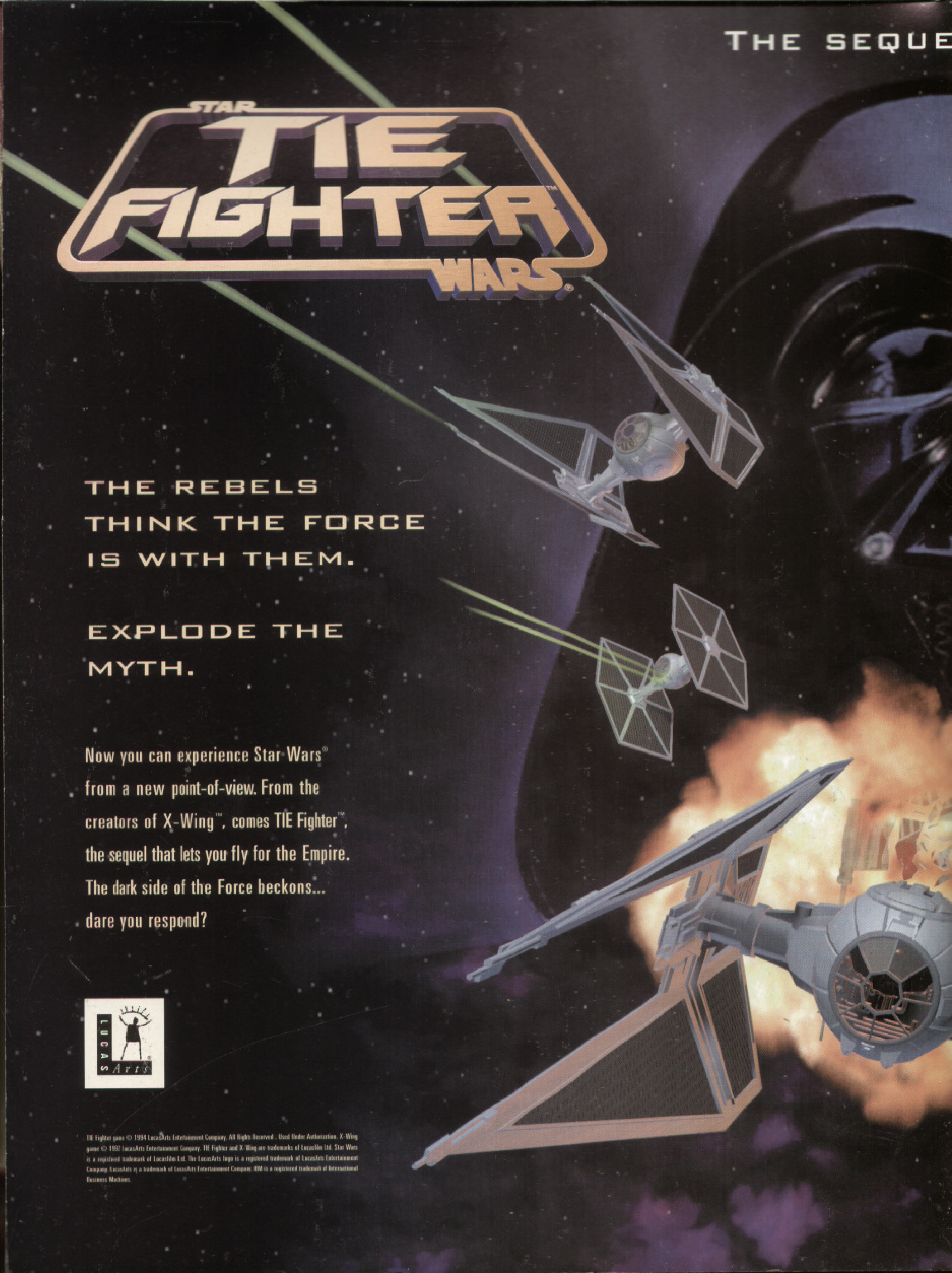

THE SEQUE

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Two things are known for sure about Outer Space: (1) it's very big, and (2) it's a great setting for computer games. Which perhaps goes someway to explaining the glut of space-related games in this issue.

In fact, although it was never our intention, this issue has turned out to be something of a 'Bumper Space Special', containing as it does reviews of Inferno (a complete and utter EXCLUSIVE to PC GAMES, I might add), TIE Fighter, Outpost and Wing Armada, as well as top previews of Wing Commander 3 and Universe.

But while we reach for the stars, we're also keeping our feet firmly on the ground (thanks for the advice, Casey), taking a look at the rise and rise of multi-player gaming and the effect that the forthcoming Windows 4 will have on the way we play games.

And as if that little lot wasn't enough for you, we've also got some *very* exciting news about big changes here at PC GAMES — turn to page 10 to find out more...

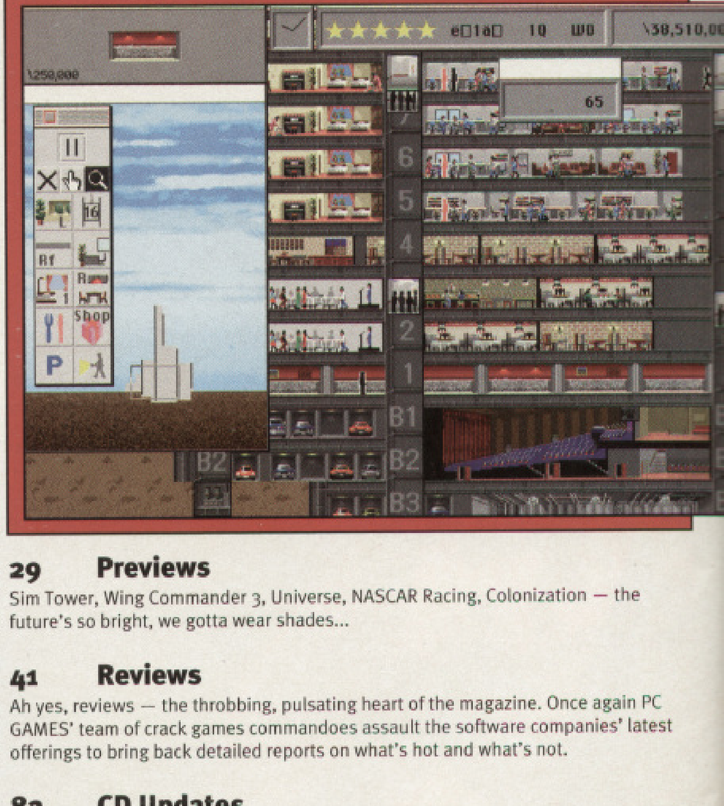
David Upchurch,
Editor.

WIN!

A Hitachi CinemaSound TV worth £900! Turn to page 110 *this instant*!

Sim Tower

Once again Maxis is doing the Sim thing — but can its latest world-builder *possibly* be better than Sim City 2000? Well, from what we've seen so far it's looking more than likely. And you can see for yourself in our preview on page 30...



6 Disks!

In these hallowed pages the arcane mysteries of the black obelisks affixed to the front of PC GAMES are finally and fatefully revealed.

10 News

The latest gossip and rumour from the exciting world of PC entertainment! Psygnosis reveals a whole brace of top-looking titles, Gremlin makes a bid for world domination, LucasArts jump on the Doom bandwagon — and more!

19 Chicago: Your kind of Windows?

Windows 4 (AKA Chicago to its chums) is coming soon to a PC near you, and promises to make MS-DOS a thing of the past — but what effect will it have on the games you play? We investigate...

Virtua Fighter

Doing it with a friend...

Birds do it. Bees do it. Even educated fleas do it. Let's do it — let's play eight-way Doom on the network. Yes, multi-player games are all the rage at the mo' — but what great wonders does the future hold in store? Find out in our feature on page 22...

29 Previews

Sim Tower, Wing Commander 3, Universe, NASCAR Racing, Colonization — the future's so bright, we gotta wear shades...

41 Reviews

Ah yes, reviews — the throbbing, pulsating heart of the magazine. Once again PC GAMES' team of crack games commandoes assault the software companies' latest offerings to bring back detailed reports on what's hot and what's not.

82 CD Updates

Short, snappy reviews of old-ish titles that have been spruced up and placed on that shiny disk that many people are already calling CD.

83 Budget reviews

Don't waste that tenner on a night down the pub or a curry — waste it on a repackaged hit from yesteryear instead! There are some real bargains to be had, you know.

Editor David Upchurch ● *Assistant Editor* Dean Evans ● *Staff Writer* Alex Fraser ● *Art Editor* David Kelsall ● *Additional Design* Paul Anderson ● *Cover Illustration* Kevin O'Neill ● *Contributors* John Bennett, Christina Erskine, Paul Glancey, Cal Jones, Martin Klimes ● *Internal Illustrations* Paul Garner , Rachel Trewin ● *Group Advertising Manager* Nigel Taylor ● *Advertising Production* Tina Gynn ● *Publishing Director* Mike Frey ● *Managing Director* Terry Pratt ● *Editorial and Advertising Offices* Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU; Tel: (071) 972 6700, Fax: (071) 972 6710 ● *Distribution* BBC Frontline Ltd, Park Road, Peterborough PE1 2TR; Tel: (0733) 555161 ● PC GAMES is produced with the help and assistance of Apple Macintosh Desktop Publishing equipment, using Quark Xpress 3.11, Adobe Photoshop 2.5, Aldus Freehand 4 and a host of others. Printed by TPL, 111 Hartlebury Trading Estate, Hartlebury, Nr Kidderminster, Worcs DY10 4JB ● *MonitorMan™ Logo* The Designers Republic ● No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a data retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher ● Cryptic quote: "Oh sorry, I'm just trying to do my job — I didn't realise that was a crime now..." ● © EMAP Images 1994

contents

88 Yours... For less than a Fiver!
The ever-bubbling Shareware scene laid bare.

94 Power up!
Headache? Tense, nervous headache? Then soothe your brain with our tips for top games like Theme Park, Al-Qadim and The Settlers!

104 Beyond the Final Frontier
Games like Inferno and TIE Fighter define the state-of-the-art in 3D space combat games, but how did we get to where we are today?

106 Dr Spanner's casebook
Say goodbye to the 'Not Enough Memory' blues with Dr Spanner's essential guide to beefing up your PC's RAM.

108 The complete guide to games jargon
All those weird games-related terms explained in plain English.

109 The TroubleShooter
What is a boot disk? And how do you make one? Trust the TroubleShooter to know...

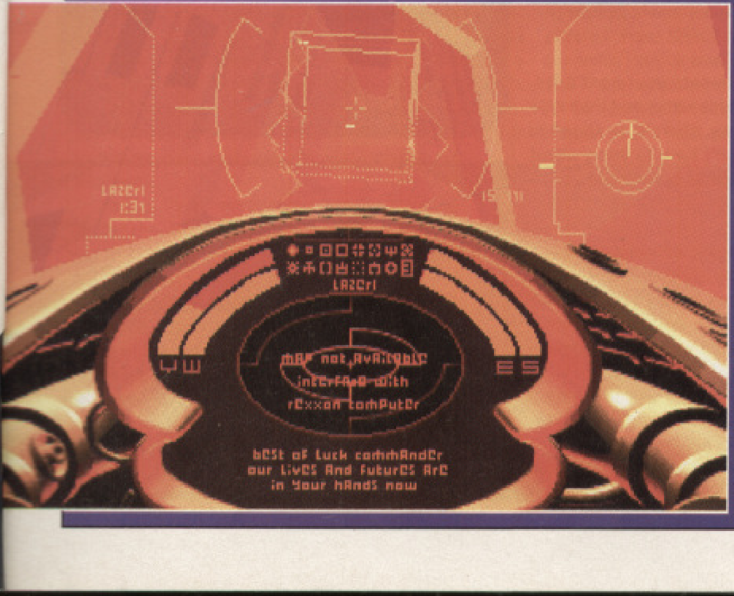
113 Letters
More semi-literate ramblings plucked randomly from our bulging mailsack.

114 Next month!
What you can expect to see in the next issue. Probably.

Subscribe to PC GAMES *now!*
We've got an *unbelievably* good offer for you! Turn to page 90!

Inferno

It's been a heck of a long time coming, but is Inferno *really* as hot as we've been lead to believe? Or has it got all the fire-starting powers of a bowl of cold rice pudding? There's only way to find out — read our EXCLUSIVE review which starts on page 42...



map not available
interface with
rexxon computer

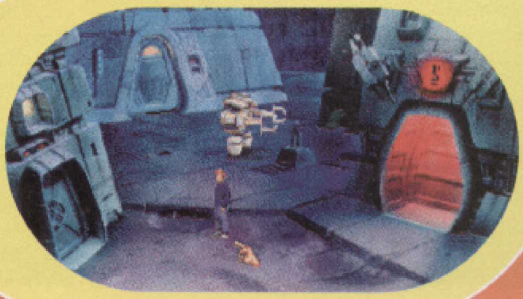
best of luck commander
our lives and futures are
in your hands now

REVIEWED THIS ***ISSUE...***

Al-Qadim CD	82
Arcade Pool	53
Battle Bugs	54
Beneath A Steel Sky CD	82
Dark Legions	48
FIFA Soccer	72
Harpoon 2	74
Heimdall 2	68
IndyCar Racing Expansion Pack	71
Inferno CD	42
Ishar 3	46
Kick Off 3	53
Litil Divil CD	82
On The Ball	66
Outpost CD	60
Overlord	70
Planet Football	64
Privateer CD	82
Project-X	52
Shadow of the Comet CD	82
Soccer Kid	58
Superhero League of Hoboken	50
TIE Fighter	78
WCK2: Tanks!	71
Zool 2	76

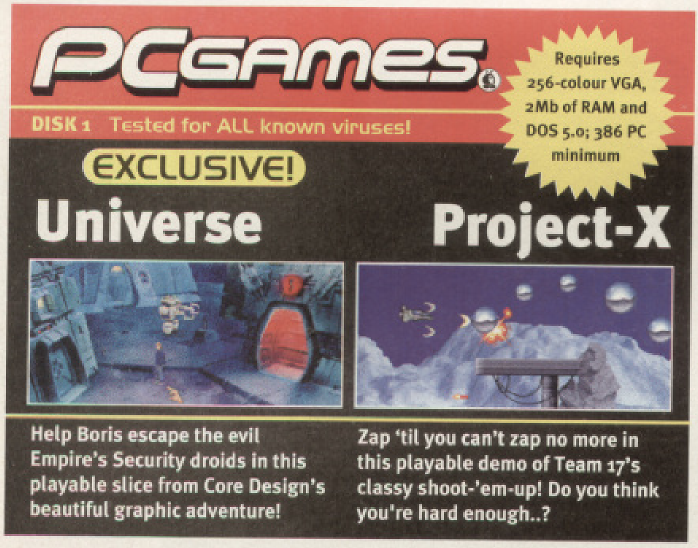
Disks!

No, you're not dreaming — there are indeed *SIX* fantastically-good demos on our coverdisks this month! And overleaf you'll discover how easy it is to start enjoying them...



Disks!

We've got something for everybody on our two HD coverdisks! In all there are SIX great, fully-playable demos for you to enjoy, including the graphic adventure Universe, the super-fast shoot-'em-up Project-X and the addictive brain-strainer BreakThru!



PCGAMES

DISK 1 Tested for ALL known viruses!

Requires 256-colour VGA, 2Mb of RAM and DOS 5.0; 386 PC minimum

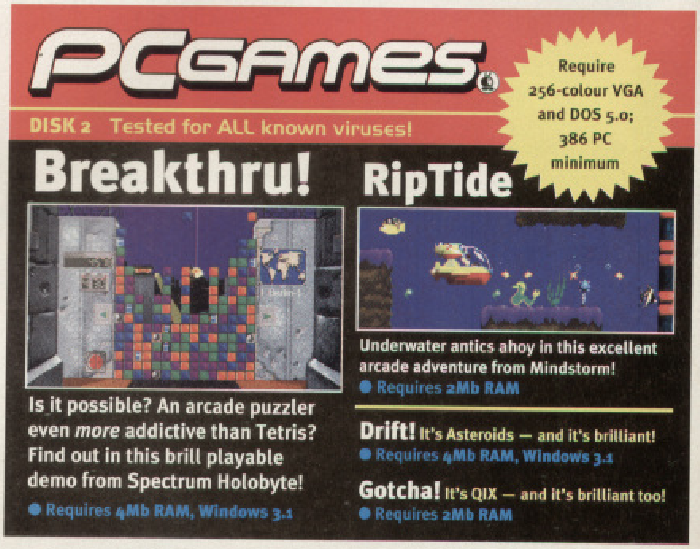
EXCLUSIVE!

Universe

Help Boris escape the evil Empire's Security droids in this playable slice from Core Design's beautiful graphic adventure!

Project-X

Zap 'til you can't zap no more in this playable demo of Team 17's classy shoot-'em-up! Do you think you're hard enough..?



PCGAMES

DISK 2 Tested for ALL known viruses!

Require 256-colour VGA and DOS 5.0; 386 PC minimum

Breakthru!

Is it possible? An arcade puzzler even *more* addictive than Tetris? Find out in this brill playable demo from Spectrum Holobyte!

● Requires 4Mb RAM, Windows 3.1

RipTide

Underwater antics ahoy in this excellent arcade adventure from Mindstorm!

● Requires 2Mb RAM

Drift! It's Asteroids — and it's brilliant!

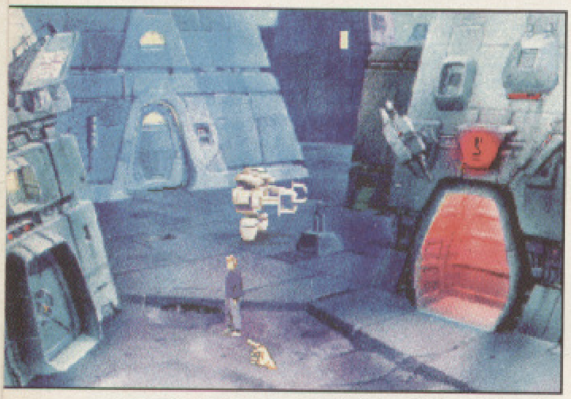
● Requires 4Mb RAM, Windows 3.1

Gotcha! It's QIX — and it's brilliant too!

● Requires 2Mb RAM

Universe

Core Design



Universe is Core Design's attempt to take on the Americans at their own game — graphic adventures! It stars a young man by the ominous name of Boris Verne who, one day while visiting his Uncle George, an eccentric inventor of the old school, touches something he shouldn't have and gets teleported to a strange and alien galaxy.

Our EXCLUSIVE demo starts just after this calamitous event, so you've got help Boris explore his new home and... well, you'll find out for yourself when you play. There are lots of thrills and spills in store for you, including a meeting with the mysterious, beautiful Silphinaa and a race against time to evade capture by the evil Security droids!

For more about Universe and its development, turn to page 34 for an in-depth preview and a glimpse at some of the exotic locations just waiting to be explored in the full game!

Loading the game...

After you've installed Universe onto your hard drive, log onto the **C:\PCG\UNIVERSE** directory and then type **UNIVERSE** to get started. Sadly, there's no sound in this demo, but at least you don't have to worry about configuring your soundcard settings or whatever.

Game controls

Universe is a point-'n'-click graphic adventure. Boris is guided around the screen by simply pointing the mouse cursor at where you want him to go and pressing the left mouse button. If you want to get somewhere in a hurry, double-clicking with the left mouse button will make Boris run.

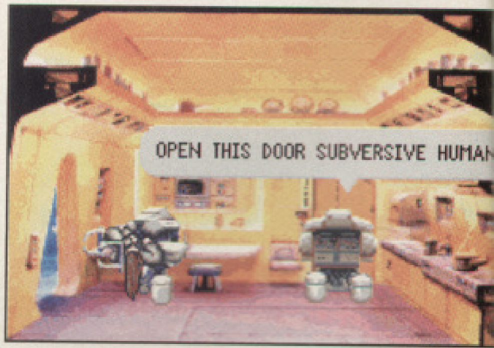
Clicking the right mouse button will bring up a panel of 'action' icons, which can be selected by clicking on them. Most 'actions' will require you to click on an object from your inventory or on an object on-screen or both. When you've finished performing whatever

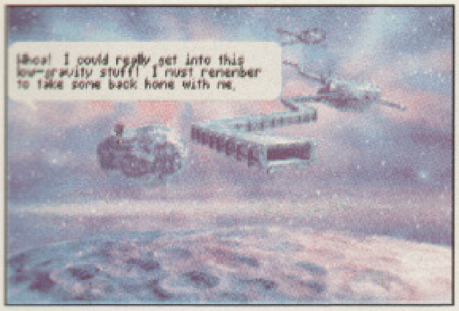
Loading your coverdisks...

① It doesn't get any easier than this. First carefully remove your disks from the cover of the mag and release them from their cellophane prison. Now insert the disk of your choice into your drive.

② Type A: (or B:, depending on the drive type) and then press the RETURN key to log onto your lavishly-crafted PC GAMES disk.

③ Type the legend PCG and press the RETURN key. Choose the program you want to load using the UP/DOWN cursor keys. It's as simple as that...





Whoa! I could really get into this low-gravity stuff! I must remember to take some back home with me.

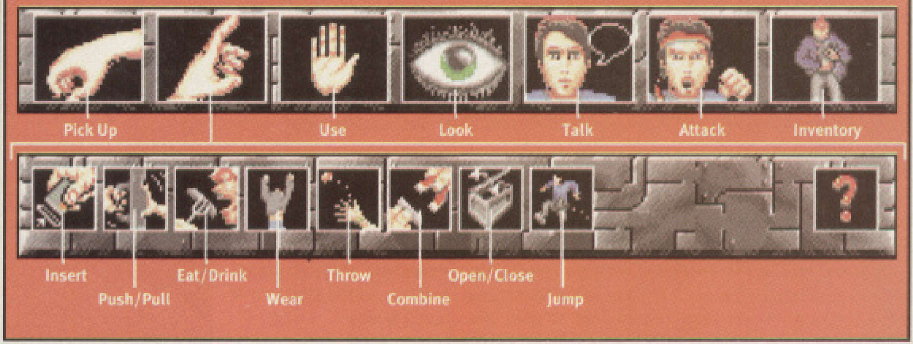
'action' you've selected, double-click with the right mouse button to deselect it.

When chatting to someone you will be presented with an assortment of conversational gambits. To select one, point at it with the mouse cursor and press the left mouse button. To cycle through the speech bubbles, press the right mouse button.

At some points in the demo you may have to access a computer terminal. To select an option, simply click on it with the left mouse button. To log off, press the right mouse button.

To be honest, the interface is very instinctive and if you've played any kind of graphic adventure before you should have no problems with it at all. Enjoy yourself — and watch out for those Security droids!

Icon see clearly now...



WARNING!

If you die or you complete the Universe demo, it will restart from the beginning. However, any objects that you picked up previously will not have been replaced in their correct locations, so your best option is to hit ESCAPE and start again.

If you claim to be lost, then how did you come to be here?

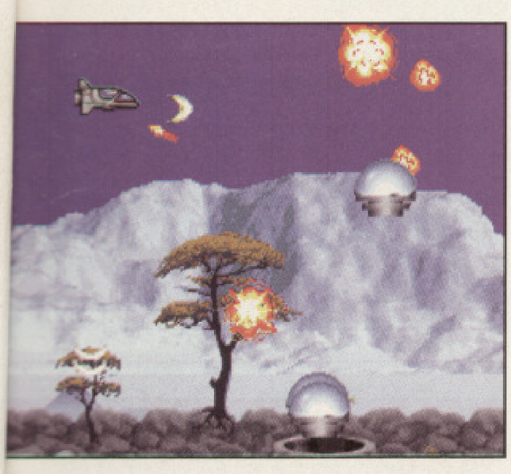
Oddly enough, I'd really like to know WHERE I am!

If you could just tell me the quickest way back to Ashby,

* * *

Project-X

Team 17



A smash hit on the Amiga, Project-X is coming soon to a PC near you, courtesy of Team 17. And you can sample its many delights in this playable slice from the game's second level.

Project-X does have a plot but there's no real point wasting space explaining it here — suffice it to say that there are some aliens on the loose who are in need of a healthy dose of blasting, and you're just the man for the job. To aid you in your feast of mindless slaughter, you're equipped with a state-of-the-art spacefighter brimming over with equally state-of-the-art weaponry.

As you fly across the horizontally-scrolling landscape, zapping all and sundry, take care not to smash into any of the scenery — it'll kill you instantly, which is not a good thing.

Also, look out for small icons with a 'P' inscribed upon them, which are left behind by some of the aliens when they cop it. By collecting them you move a highlighted marker along the power-up menu bar at the bottom of the screen. When it reaches a power-up you fancy, you can select it and add it to your ship!

Okay, that's the briefing over with — now get out there and kick some alien butt, pronto!

Loading the game...

Once you've installed Project-X onto your hard disk, log onto the **C:\PCG\PROJX** directory and type **X** to start.

If you've got a Sound Blaster or comatible soundcard, type **X S** for sound.

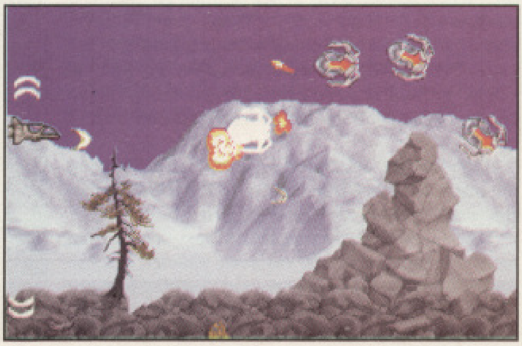
If you've got a Gravis Ultrasound card type **X G**.

In this demo version the sound is a little glitchy and interferes slightly with the smooth horizontal scrolling. Rest assured, however, that this is not the case in the final version.

Game Controls

As with all shoot-'em-ups the controls are not that complicated. Press SPACE to start playing, then use the cursor arrow keys to move your ship around, SPACE to fire and TAB to select power-ups.

To return to the title screen press ESCAPE and press it again to quit back to DOS.



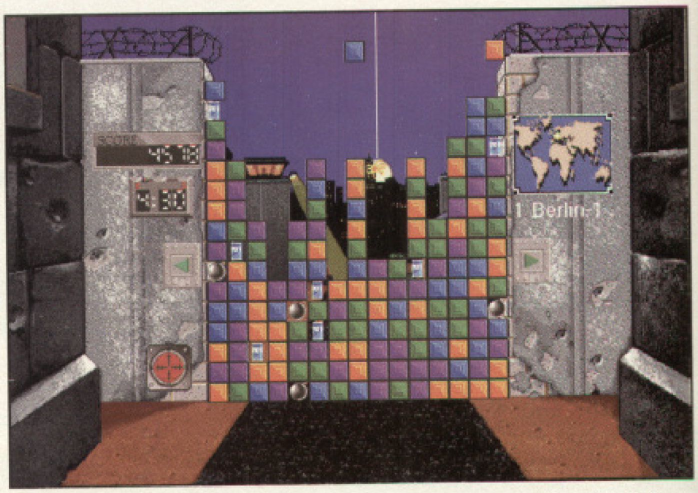
Making a boot disk

If you're having problems running any of this month's games try making a boot disk. Take a freshly formatted floppy disk, slap it into the disk drive (I'll assume it's drive A for the moment) and type: **SYS A:**. The system files will be transferred and within seconds you'll have a boot disk on your hands.

All you then need to do is leave the floppy in the disk drive, reset your machine and finally try loading the game again. Don't take the disk out of the machine as it boots up because you want the PC to read the information from the floppy rather than the hard disk.

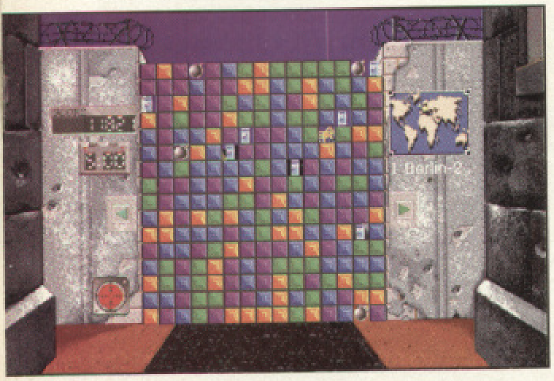
BreakThru!

Spectrum HoloByte



Alexey Pajitnov, the man what wrote the world famous time-guzzler Tetris, is back — and if anything BreakThru!, his latest arcade puzzler, is even more infuriatingly addictive!

In BreakThru! you're presented with a screen full to the brim with coloured blocks, the aim being to destroy all the blocks before the timer counts down to zero. The problem is you can only destroy groups of blocks — try to remove a block without a like-coloured neighbour either horizontally or vertically and it won't budge.



As you play, more blocks will rain down from a 'conveyor belt' at the top of the screen, sometimes helping, sometimes hindering your screen-clearing exploits. There are also weird things like bombs and rockets to contend with, and spiders which get in the way, and...

...To be honest, BreakThru! is the sort of game which is simpler to play than it is to explain. Why not just load it up and give it a go? You should get the hand of it pretty quickly — you'll be hooked within *seconds*, I guarantee it.

Loading the game...

Load up Windows as normal, then select **RUN** from the **FILE** menu. Now seek out the **C:\PCG\BRKTHRU** folder and then double-click on the **BTDEMO.EXE** file.

Game controls

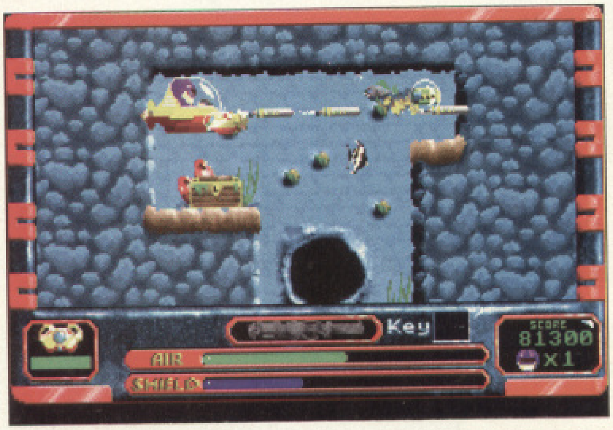
BreakThru! contains a built-in 'Help' file which explains all the game's controls and features far better than I ever could — press F1 at any time to call it up.

This demo only allows you to play for five minutes before restarting — see how many walls you can knock down in the time available. Dave the Editor managed to get about half-way through his third and he's rubbish, so you'll probably be able to do loads more.

• •

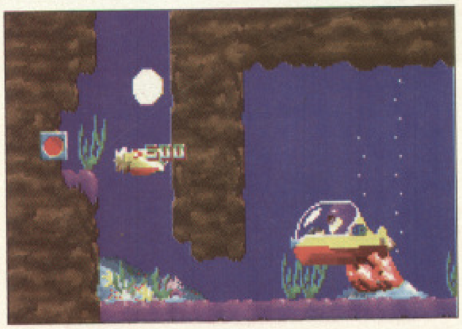
RipTide

Mindstorm Software



Lovers of tuna everywhere are in big trouble. The insanely-brilliant Dr Riptide has developed the Tunamatic, a hideous device which turns any living matter into a tasty tuna substitute, and is flooding the market with it. Is it real? Or is it Memorex? Nobody knows.

But one thing's for sure — Dr Riptide must be stopped! So the authorities send for Nick Nautilus, Special Naval Agent 1138. Equipped with a submarine and a compact remote submersible called JASON, it's Nick's job to penetrate Dr Riptide's underwater HQ and save the world's tuna suppliers.



RipTide is a superb arcade adventure from Mindstorm Software. It's full of fun action, and some interesting puzzles thanks to the fact that the sub and JASON can be operated independently. One thing's for sure — it's a lot more enjoyable than SeaQuest DSV ever was...

Loading the game...

After installing Riptide onto your hard disk, log onto the **C:\PCG\RIPTIDE** directory and type **RIPTIDE** to start. RipTide supports Sound Blaster and compatible soundcards, but you'll need 600K of memory free to run the music and sound effects. If you haven't got a suitable soundcard, or if you can't be bothered to fiddle around with your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT, type **RIPTIDE -PCSOUND** to default to the PC's internal bleeper.

Game controls

On the title screen, press SPACE to bring up the menu bar and select 'Start' from the **Game** menu to begin playing. There's a load of instructions provided in the game, but basically the idea of each level is to find the exit before your air supply runs out — although if you bob up to the surface you can replenish your oxygen tanks.

Your submarine is directed around the screen using the cursor arrow keys, and hitting SPACE will fire whatever weapon you're carrying at the time.

Pressing ALT will release JASON from the sub, and he is controlled in exactly the same manner. You can toggle between control over the sub and JASON at any time by pressing the ALT key.

Bear in mind, however, that although JASON can pick up coins and gems, he can't collect power-ups. Also, JASON has a limited energy supply, as shown by the green bar to the left of the score panel, and if it runs out JASON will explode. To top the energy bar back up you must position Jason over the sub and press ALT to dock.

As you explore, you may see red buttons set into the maze walls — shooting them will open doors. Also, blast any barrels you find — most contain valuables, such as shield and air power-ups, as well as keys which will let you pass through locked doors.

If you find any interesting-looking cave entrances, you can investigate what lies within by floating over them and pressing the ALT key. The ALT key will also clear any on-screen messages.

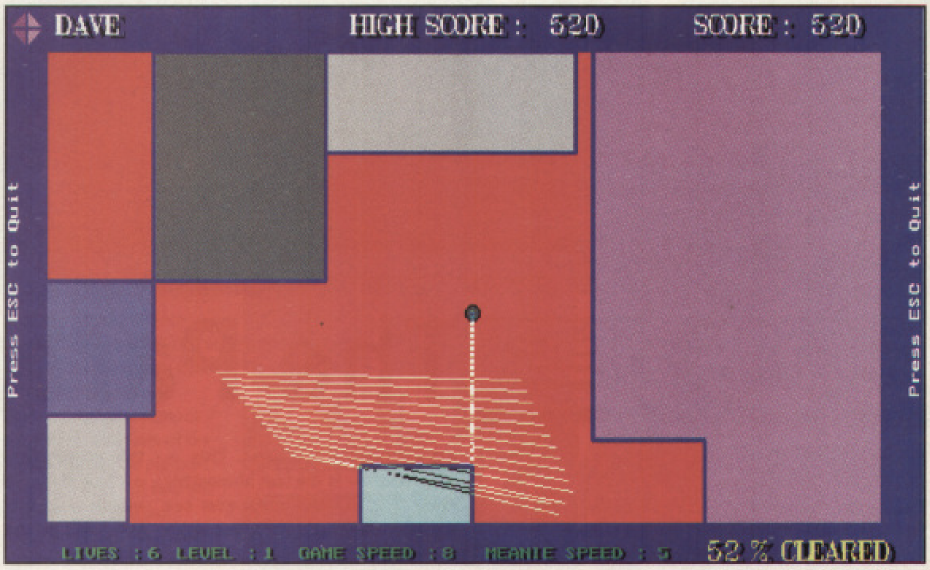
Pressing ESCAPE at any time during the game will bring up the menu bar, which also pauses the game — select 'Resume' from the **Game** menu to carry on playing, or 'Quit' to return to DOS.

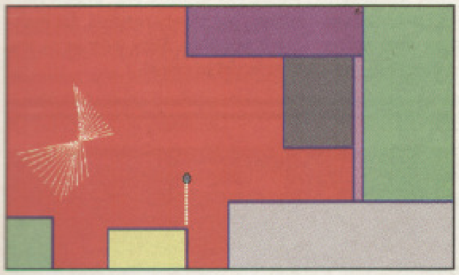
Gotcha!

Shareware

Anyone out there remember the old coin-op QIX? No, I thought you wouldn't (Tsk — kids today, eh?) It was a smashing little game where you had to guide a blob around the screen, trying to draw coloured boxes. Once you'd 'boxed up' a certain percentage of the playing area, the screen cleared and you did it all over again. Great, eh?

Okay, so it doesn't sound very exciting, I know, but that's because I've yet to tell you about the Sparx, fast-moving critters who bounce around the screen. Should they collide with your little blob or the line it's drawing then you lose a life.





At first there's only one Sparx to contend with, but later there are two and maybe even three (though we don't know for sure because we weren't good enough to get that far).

There are also bonus rounds, where you have to box up as much of the screen as possible within a tight time-limit without losing a life.

Gotcha! boasts no texture mapping or Gouraud shading, just good, clean, old-fashioned fun — believe us, you'll love it.

Loading the game...

Once you've installed Gotcha! onto your hard disk, log onto the **C:\PCG\GOTCHA** directory and type **GOTCHA** to start. Gotcha! uses the PC's internal bleeper for sound, so you don't have to worry about configuring soundcards and what-not.

Game controls

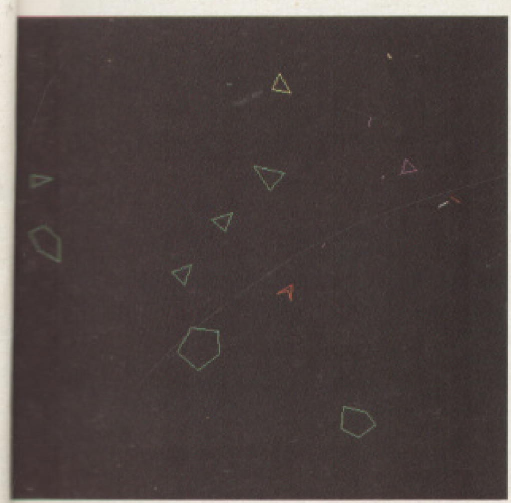
Once you've started the game, type in your name as requested and press 'Y' or 'N' depending on whether you want sound effects. Now, erm, use the cursor arrow keys to move the blob around, and press ESCAPE to quit back to the main menu... and that's it, really.

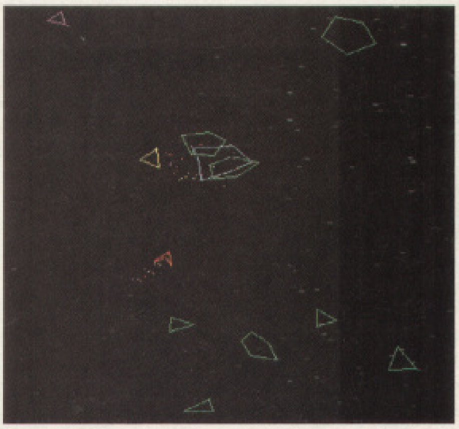
Drift

Freeware

Like Gotcha!, Drift is another updated blast from the past, this time of the old arcade stalwart Asteroids. The aim is simple: fly around in your spaceship, zapping all the tumbling bits of space debris, until the screen is clear. Some rocks release power-ups when shot, which you can collect by flying into them. Also, stay alert for attacks by the evil Polygunzz!

What more is there to say? Drift is, as the cliche goes, brilliantly simple, and simply brilliant. Have fun!





Loading the game...

Load up Windows as normal, then select **RUN** from the **FILE** menu. Now seek out the **C:\PCG\DRIFT** folder and then double-click on the **DRIFT.EXE** file.

Game controls

Drift features a built-in 'Help' feature which will give you the full low-down on things like power-ups and your Polygunzz foe, so we won't go into that here.

Suffice it to say, pressing F2 will start the game and the following keys control your spacefighter:

Rotate Clockwise	Right cursor arrow.
Rotate Anti-Clockwise	Left cursor arrow.
Thrust	Up cursor arrow.
Fire	SPACE.

In addition, pressing F3 pauses the game, F10 quits and ESCAPE pauses the game and minimises the window — handy for when the boss walks in while you're playing!

ALERT! ALERT! My disk is faulty!

Due to the massively huge number of disks that are duplicated, the occasional one might be a touch faulty. If you're unlucky enough to get one of these, don't despair because help is at hand. Whatever you do DON'T SEND THEM TO US! Simply send them off to the following address with an SAE for 28p:

PC GAMES Bodged Disks,
Diskxpress,
Unit 7, Willow Court,
Bourton Industrial Park,
Bourton-on-the-water,
Gloucestershire GL54 2HQ.

If you think you can solve your problems over the phone, try calling the disk helpline on **(0451) 810788**. The helpline is open between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays.

What the... HELP!

Universe, Project-X, RipTide and Gotcha! all require a minimum of 580K of free base memory and 2Mb of Expanded (EMS) memory to run. Providing you have this, not Extended memory (XMS), they shouldn't cause you any problems at all.

● These demos do not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software. Ignore at your peril!

The fine print bit...

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SIM TOWER
Can Maxis out-sim its own Sim City 2000?
SLAM IN THE RAM!
How to upgrade your PC's memory — easily!

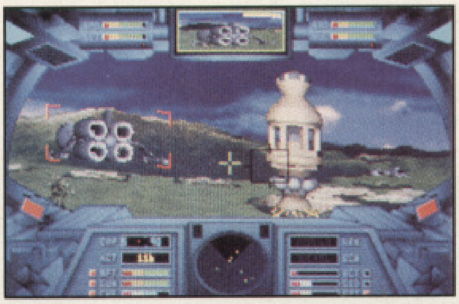
The Party's *Over...*

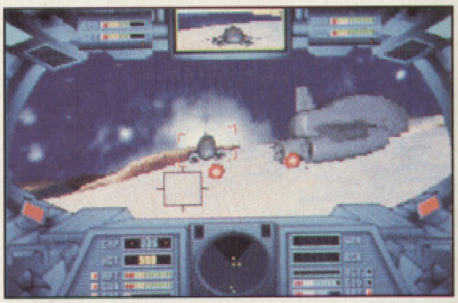
We have grave news. This — sob! — is the last bi-monthly issue of PC GAMES you'll ever see because... because... because we're going *monthly*!

Yes, it's true! Due to phenomenal reader response, Lord EMAP has decreed that it's all systems go on PC GAMES, and from now on this magazine will hit the shelves on the first Thursday of every month — in other words, the next issue will hit the streets on the 6th of October!

So why are we sad? Because it means we won't be able to lounge around for weeks on end doing nothing anymore. But the good thing is it also means we'll be able to bring you even hotter news, previews, reviews and tips than ever before! Hoorah!

All of us on the PC GAMES team would like to say a big "Thank you" to you, our lovely readers, for making it possible. Stick with us — the best is yet to come!





It's Time For **Retribution!**

Gremlin Graphics celebrates its tenth birthday come this Autumn. And to mark this momentous historical event, the company is planning to release its most ambitious project to date — Retribution.

Years, as they say, in the making, Gremlin's PR gurus claim that Retribution will be "a benchmark... [it's] more than just another game, it's a statement of intent that Gremlin is up there with the best in the world. In fact it's so good, we know it will change the face of the whole company."

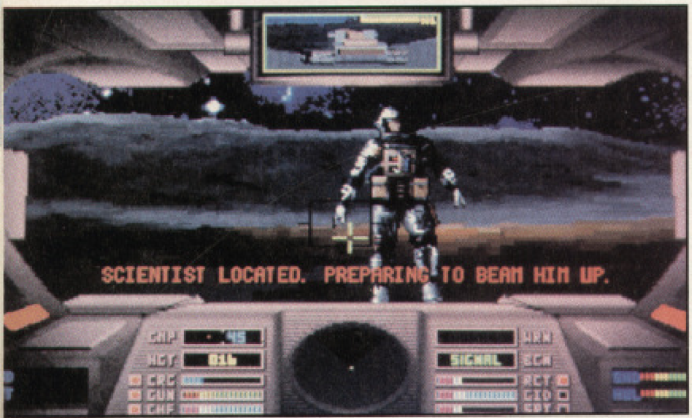
Crikey, lads — calm down! These are bold claims indeed, but from what we've seen of Retribution so far it does look like the Sheffield-based software house may have a winner on its hands.

Scheduled for release on both floppy and CD-ROM this November, Retribution is an exciting blend of action and strategy set over 400 years in the future, with the player cast as a lone pilot struggling to save humanity from the predatory Krellans, evil aliens who wish to use humans as a source of high-protein food.

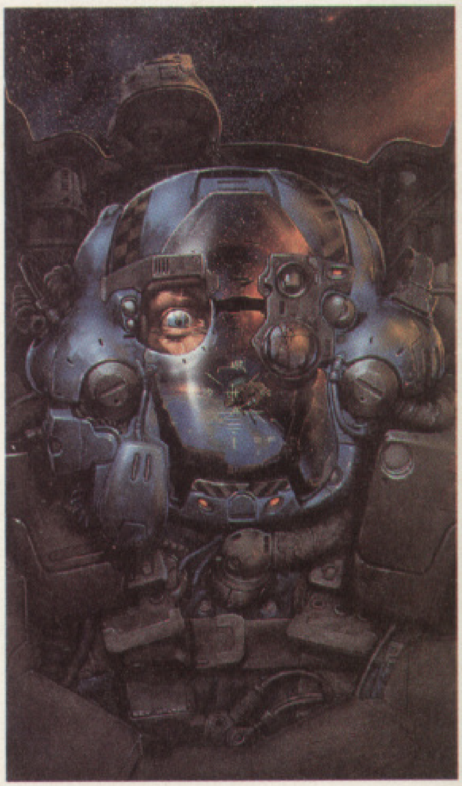
Employing advanced Voxel Spacing technology to depict the action (as seen in games like Novalogic's Comanche: Maximum Overkill and Cyberdreams' CyberRace), Retribution boasts 11 campaigns and over 50 individual missions, all linked together by cinematic scene-setting animations.

Gremlin is sparing no expense on Retribution, employing a professional scriptwriter to develop the game's storyline, Chris Adams, the award-winning classical composer, to write the musical score and Kev Walker, the 2000AD artist and creative consultant on the new Judge Dredd movie, to produce the in-game artwork.

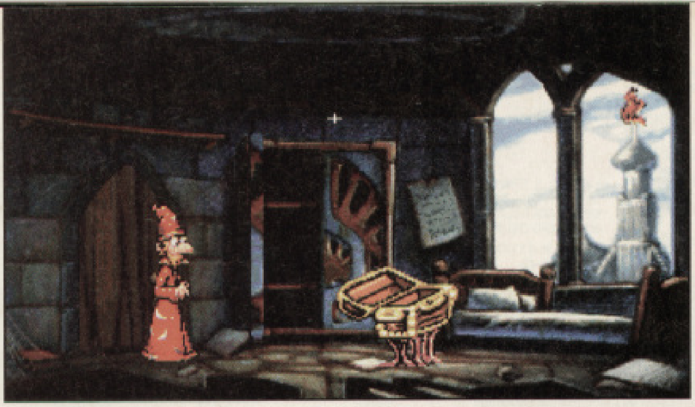
It all sounds jolly exciting — and you can find out more about it in our exclusive in-depth preview next month!



SCIENTIST LOCATED. PREPARING TO BEAM HIM UP.



Psyggy Strikes Back!



Although a near-legendary Amiga developer, Psygnosis hasn't yet enjoyed quite the same critical and commercial success on the PC. However, with the unveiling of its Autumn line-up, that all looks set to change — indeed, from what we've seen so far, the company's new titles could elevate it to the forefront of the PC games market.

Two of the games — The Ring Cycle and Novastorm (formerly Scavenger 4) — were previewed in-depth last issue, so we won't go into them in detail again. However, suffice it to say that as they near completion they're both looking stunning, with Novastorm shaping up particularly well — words can't describe its breath-taking graphics.

Then there's Discworld, based on the phenonemally-popular comic fantasy novels by Terry Pratchett, which takes the form of a point-'n'-click graphic adventure. Again, this looks beautiful, boasting some wonderfully-animated characters and simply *gorgeous* backdrops, a virtually transparent player interface and a script written by a professional comedy writer. Developed for CD-ROM only, Discworld will be a full 'talkie', boasting the vocal talents of, amongst many others, Eric 'Monty Python' Idle and John 'Dr Who' Pertwee.

Fans of Infogrames' Alone In The Dark games will go positively *ga-ga* over Ecstatica, an arcade adventure in a very similar mould. The game's main selling point is its "ellipsoid-technology polygon-generated graphics" which, in Earth-speak, means that the 3D characters have a more rounded, natural look about them — and, it has to be said, they do look pretty spectacular.

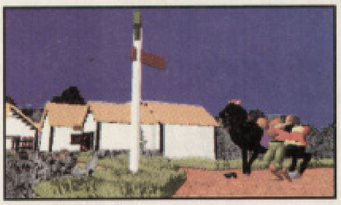
Of course, Psynosis is most famous for its Lemmings games, and fans of the green-haired little tykes will be pleased to hear that there's not one, not two but *five* further sequels in the pipeline.

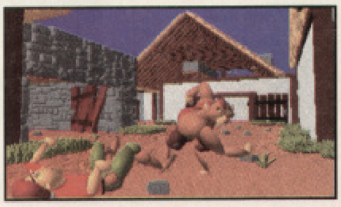
Most radical is Lemmings 3D which, as the name implies, is Lemmings but in, er, 3D. Although it looks amazing, we've yet to be convinced that the 3D view won't make it all *very* confusing to play. Still, the game's not due for release until next year, so there's plenty of time to sort out things like that.

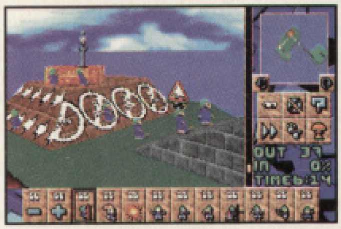
Nearer to release is the tentatively-titled All New World Of Lemmings, the first in a mini-series of four games, each of which will centre around the antics of three of the twelve Lemmings tribes featured in Lemmings 2.

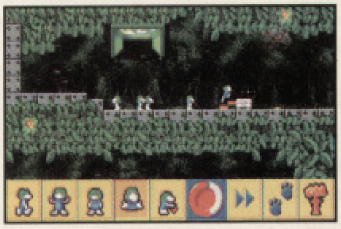
Although the puzzle-solving gameplay is the same as always, there have been some major graphical enhancements — the Lemming sprites are now much bigger and the backgrounds are a lot more detailed — and, in a return to the game's roots, the player interface has been made a lot simpler than the one used in Lemmings 2.

Lemmings 3D aside, all the above games are due for a November or December release. To tell you the truth, we can't wait...

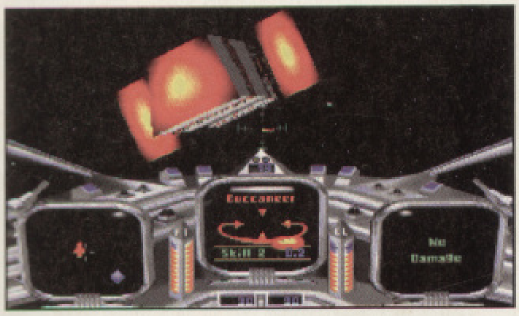








The Last Crusade?



With Inferno, TIE Fighter and Wing Armada out this month, and surefire monsters like Wing Commander 3 and Iron Angel looming on the horizon, it does make you wonder if the games market can bear yet another 3D space combat game.

All the same, that hasn't stopped GameTek from unveiling Star Crusader, a game which, so it's claimed, "breaks new ground in science-fiction gaming, with technological advances that far surpass other spaceflight simulators on the market."

Yeah, well we've all heard that before, but from what we've seen of the game it looks like GameTek aren't just blowing a lot of hot air. For a start the graphics really are very nice, with all of the eleven types of spacecraft benefitting from full texture mapping, Gouraud shading and — here's a new one for you — Phong shading (by the way, if anybody out there actually knows what that is, could they please write in and tell us).

Star Crusader also promises to have a little more depth and variety than your usual space blast-'em-up because, in addition to the exciting space combat, there's a strong strategy element, with the player able to plan overall strategies and orchestrate battles from the comfort of his holo-chair (or something).

But the proof of the pudding is, as they say, in the eating, and we'll be tucking into this little delicacy when it's launched this November on CD-ROM, price to be announced.

Just Klik & Play!

If you've ever dreamed of writing your own smash hit game, then look out for Klik & Play when it's released this October. Developed in-house by Europress Software, Klik & Play is a Windows-based games creator which, it's claimed, is so easy to use that even the most techno-fearing Luddite could create a commercial-quality game in a fraction of the time it would take normally. Alexey Pajitnov, the creator of Teris, called it "a remarkable achievement" — and who are we to argue? More news next month...

That's Myster-X to you!

Due for November release from Millennium is Myster-X, a rather nifty-looking beat-'em-up. Actually, Millennium stresses that it's not a beat-'em-up at all, but a 'combat simulation'. Produced in collaboration with top martial arts geeza Neil Axe, Myster-X features no magical fireballs or special powers, just loads of authentic — though still spectacular — fighting moves. More news soon...

Oh, *super*!

And talking of fightin'-'n'-fumpin' games, you'll no doubt be delighted to learn that Super Street Fighter II will be coming out on PC soon courtesy of US Gold. Sequel to — you guessed it — Street Fighter 2, the game boasts four new fighters — Cammy from England (huzzah!), Fei Long from China, T. Hawk from North America and D.J. from Jamaica — as well as new combat moves for the original combatants, bonus awards for combination attacks and a whole host of graphical and aural tweaks. Expect it to sell by the *bucketload* when it's released this November...

On The Warpath...

Choppers, it seems, are 'in' at the moment, and Digital Integration — they of Tornado fame — are not ones to be left behind. Set for an early '95 launch is Apache, a flight sim based around the Apacha AH-64 attack helicopter. Technically this promises to be a big advance on Tornado, featuring Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped SVGA graphics (better start saving for that Pentium...). Although DI states that Apache will have all the depth and authenticity of its previous sims, its also aiming to make it accessible to mainstream gamesplayers too.

It's a steal!

How cheap? Yes, you can now pick up a PC game for just £4.99 thanks to US Gold's Kixx budget label. And it's not rubbish either, including titles such as MicroProse Soccer, Carrier Command, E-Motion, Stunt Car Racer, Rick Dangerous 1 & 2, World Class Leaderboard and Street Fighter. Why not check 'em out..?

Hail, humans! It is I, Imp, the Devil's only officially-licensed advocate, here again to present you with yet another shocking statement, to wit:

"I *love* the Amiga!"

Are you familiar with the Commodore Amiga? Probably — in fact, there's a good chance that you used to own one. And now, no doubt, as you sit smugly in front of your 33MHz 486 mega-monster, playing the latest 40Mb texture-mapped epic, you pity those poor fools who've yet to upgrade and join the PC gaming elite.

And, with such a patronising, small-minded attitude, it's likely you weren't saddened to learn the recent news that Commodore is in financial trouble and looking for buyer. After all, why should you care if Commodore goes under? You've got your PC.

But this news should sadden — and worry — you. As the gaming world turns more and more to Hollywood for its inspiration (i.e. gorgeous but non-interactive FMV sequences taking the place of gameplay), and many of the big companies try harder and harder to 'tailor' their products to the market (i.e. write to a formula) the loss of a machine like the Amiga is very disturbing.

For although the Amiga can't hold a candle to the PC in terms of processing power, over the years it's been the breeding ground for more top original games than you can possibly imagine, games like Populous, Cannon Fodder, Jimmy White's 'Whirlwind' Snooker, Stunt Car Racer, Wizkid — the list goes on and on.

Why is this? Well, it's mainly because the Amiga is a machine for people who like to tinker, who like to explore a machine's internal structure, who like to write bits of code to see what special effects can be created by sending non-standard instructions to the graphics and sound custom chips.

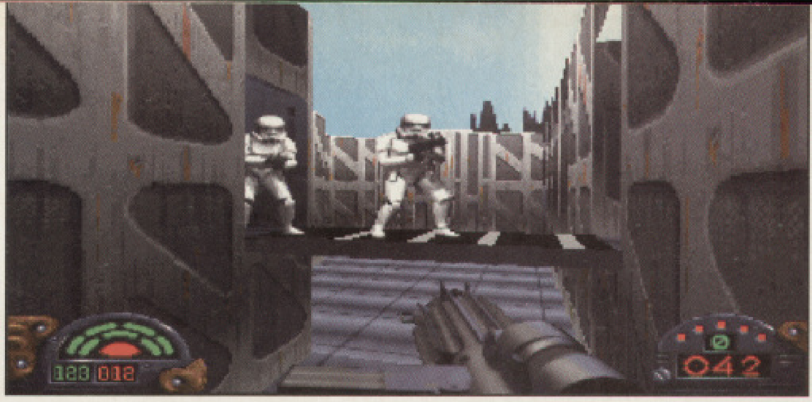
Most programmers start out as tinkerers, and many of the people responsible for today's top games — certainly in the UK, at least — cut their programming teeth on the Amiga and got jobs in the software industry thanks to demos written on the Amiga. If the Amiga dies, where's all that fresh talent with exciting new ideas going to come from?

Not the console market, that's for sure — it's a totally closed shop to the tinkerer. And for all its mighty processing power, the PC is not a tinkerer's machine. Because of the PC's primitive internal architecture, it's simply not that much fun to explore.

And, in a way, the PC is almost too powerful. It practically encourages sloppy, lazy, badly-structured programming. Can't get your 3D engine running fast enough? No problem — we'll just state 'Pentium Recommended' on the box. On the other hand, people writing for the Amiga have to struggle hard to get the most from the machine by writing tight, efficient, organised code.

I hope that the Amiga continues to exist in some form because if it doesn't, sooner or later, we're all going to miss it — badly.

● What do you think of Imp's ravings? Write in and tell us at: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. By the way, Imp's opinions are all his own, and in no way reflect those of PC GAMES or its publishers.

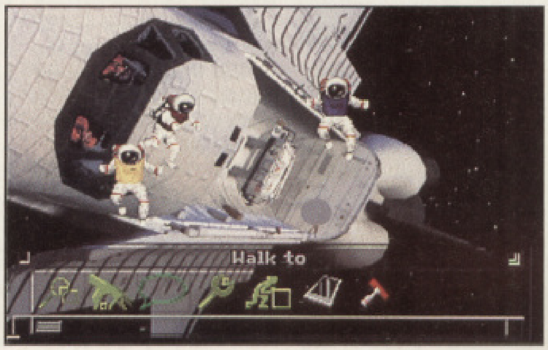


LucasArts Doomed?

Well, no — not quite. However, it has to be said that LucasArts' forthcoming Dark Forces does bear more than the slightest resemblance to Id Software's now-classic 3D chainsaw-'em-up, Doom — which is perhaps no surprise, as they're both based around the different versions of the same game engine.

Set in the ever-popular Star Wars universe, Dark Forces casts you as a Rebel special agent working deep within Empire-held territory, your mission to steal the plans for the dreaded Death Star. This then leads to further missions when you discover that Admiral Mohc has plans to create Darktroopers — mechanised super stormtroopers!

LucasArts' 3D engine features several enhancements over Id's, notably the ability to look up and down as well as jump. This, along with Dark Forces' strong mission-based structure and Star Wars-inspired storyline, should ensure that the game sells like proverbial hot cakes when it's released this November.



Also due for launch at around about the same time is Full Throttle, a dark-'n'-moody graphic adventure which centres around the adventures of Ben, the leader of the Polecats motorcyle gang. Accused of a crime he did not commit — murder, no less — Ben is on the run from the law and you've got to help him clear his name.

Full Throttle is a major departure from LucasArts' usual adventure style, featuring a mixture of highly-impressive 2D and 3D sequences and the accent on action rather than tortuous puzzle solving. Admittedly, the thought of Full Throttle doesn't get us quite as hot and bothered as Dark Forces does, but it still looks *very* good.

Last, but not least, is The Dig, another graphic adventure based upon a collaboration between LucasArts and Steven Spielberg which has been in development for... oooh, quite a while now. Originally intended as an episode in Spielberg's Amazing Stories TV show, The Dig evolved into a game after it was realised that it would be far too expensive to film.

The Dig describes the events following the discovery of an asteroid heading on a collision course with Earth. A team of scientists is dispatched to try and destroy it, but when they get there they discover an alien device which teleports them to a strange planet...

Look out for a report from inside LucasArts' California HQ in the next issue of PC GAMES for more on all the above!

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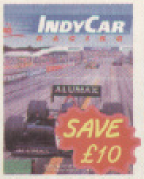
24.99



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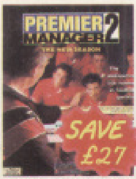

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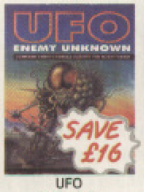

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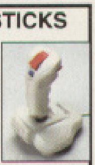

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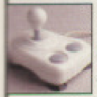

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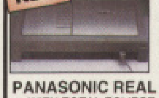

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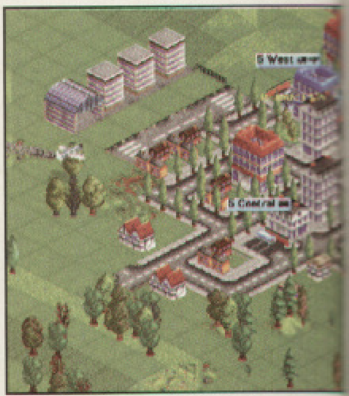
Throw Mama From The *Train...*

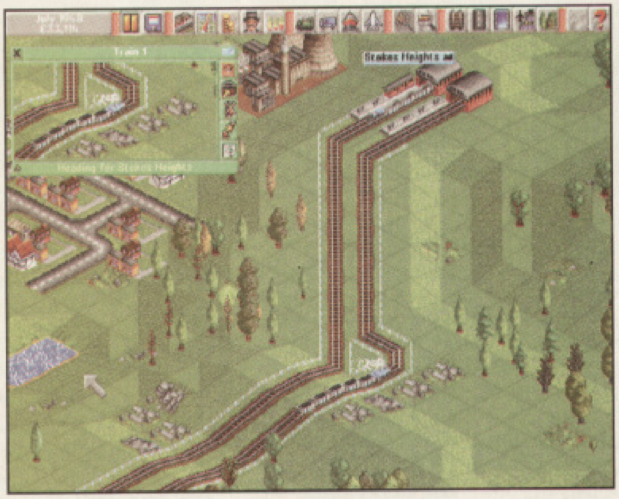
After Railroad Tycoon, MicroProse is delicately poised to release Transport Tycoon, an isometric-3D strategy game that challenges the player to construct a transportation network of planes, trains, trucks and automobiles.

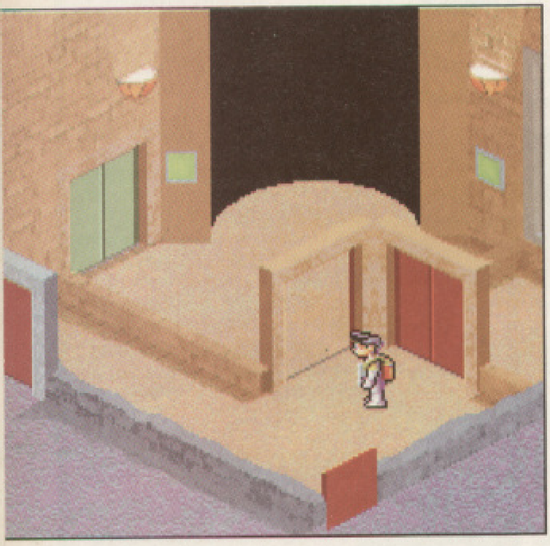
The approach is refreshingly simple, but the game is deeply complex. Starting with a mere $50,000 you must build up a successful transportation empire, supplying refineries with oil, shunting wood from the forests to the saw mills and running passenger services between the major towns and villages. Like Railroad Tycoon you must maintain and service your vehicles and, as the years pass slowly by, new vehicles become available to replace your ageing fleet.

The attention to detail is stunning and while you can watch your little buses and trains shuttling goods and passengers between A and B, there are up to four rival transport companies vying for a slice of your lucrative business.

Transport Tycoon will be released in early November and, if like us you think it might well be a biggie, watch out for more news in our next exciting issue.





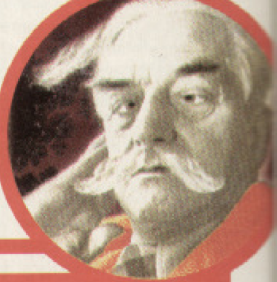


Join The Academy!

If you thought A-Levels were tough, it's nothing compared to what the Cadets at the Space Academy have to go through to graduate. Before they can leave the school they have to undertake one last, lethal mission — to retrieve a pizza from the middle of labyrinthine maze full of monsters and puzzles.

And, as a Space Cadet, such is your task in Space Academy, which is coming your way soon courtesy of Mindscape. With its isometric-3D viewpoint and arcade puzzle-related gameplay, it's very reminiscent of D/Generation, which is no bad thing because we loved D/Generation.

Space Academy is due for release next month, price to be announced.

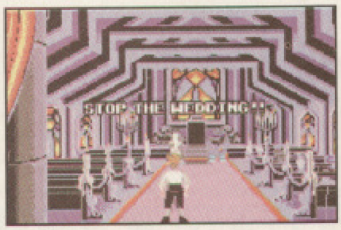


Classic Moments In Games

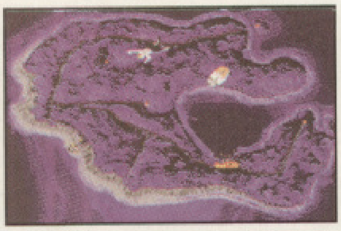
With Sir Harvey Barrington,

Games-as-Art Critic.

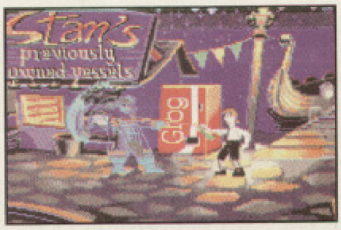
My most sincerest thanks go to Alan Morton of Cambs this month, for recommending the following oh-so-memorable sequence from LucasArts' seminal The Secret Of Monkey Island. For his labours, he earns himself a copy of TIE Fighter — which, by the strangest twist of fate, is also written by LucasArts...



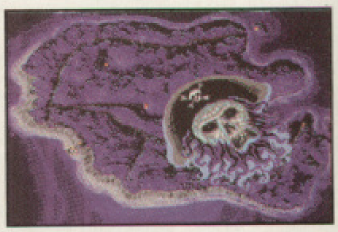
After many exotic adventures, our hero Guybrush learns that the evil Ghost Pirate LeChuck is planning to force his beloved Governor Marley to marry him. Making haste, Guybrush bursts into the church and orders the ceremony to stop.



Needless to say, LeChuck is less than happy about this unwarranted intrusion, and a huge fight ensues, in which LeChuck uses his supernatural strength to send Guybrush flying — quite literally — all over Melee Island...

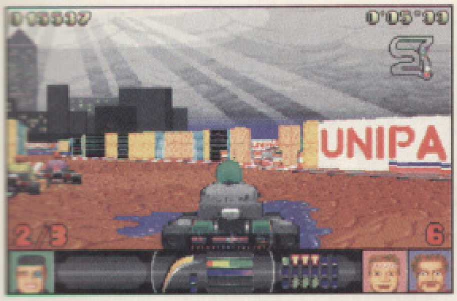


Eventually Guybrush lands inside the Grog Machine outside Stan's second-hand ship store. LeChuck soons catches up, and is about to land one final, fateful blow when Guybrush spots a can of Grog lying nearby, and squirts it at his foe...



The Grog has a devastating effect on LeChuck's ethereal form, causing it to explode, sending LeChuck's skull soaring high into the night sky. Guybrush's quest is over, and he returns home to claim the Governor's hand... Or does he?

● If you have a Classic Moment you'd like Sir Harv to recall for your pleasure, then write in to us as the usual PC GAMES address. There's a prize for those people whose suggestions we use!



Watch Out Mario!

While the console kids have their bouncing, coin-collecting Super Mario Kart, thanks to Manic Media productions the PC now has its very own go-karting game which goes by the name of SuperKarts. Using texture-mapped 3D graphics, SuperKarts allows you to race against up to seven computer-controlled opponents on a variety of difficult tracks and highly-dangerous courses.

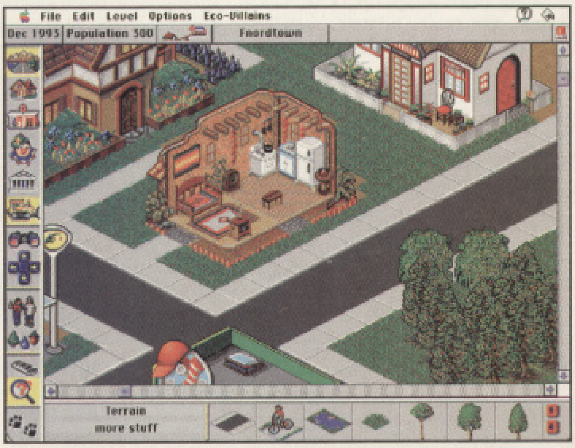
With secret passages, bonus pick-ups, jumps, turbo boosts and even a multi-player network mode, SuperKarts promises to be an accessible yet slick addition to the racing fraternity. And with over two hours of funky House music as a backing soundtrack, it's a game you could never accuse of being quiet.

Manic Media plan to launch the game at this Autumn's European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) in September. We'll bring you a full and frank review in the next issue.

Maxis About **Town**

Coming soon from Maxis is Sim Town, a sort of 'son of Sim City 2000' but which is aimed very much at the kiddy 'edutainment' (awful word) market. It shares many of the features of Sim City 2000, but on a much smaller and simpler scale.

Using a icon-based menu, the player gets to lay down roads and buildings to create residential streets, shopping malls, entertainment complexes and so on. It's also possible to take the lids off all the buildings and see what the little people inside are getting up to — though this being a kids' game it's unlikely to be anything too rude, more's the pity.



Charts!

Top 10 PC Games

1	**TIE Fighter**	LucasArts
2	**FIFA International Soccer**	Electronic Arts
3	**Sim City 2000**	Maxis
4	**Theme Park**	Bullfrog
5	**Cannon Fodder**	Virgin Int. Ent.
6	**Ultima VIII**	Origin
7	**The Settlers**	Blue Byte
8	**1942: Pacific Air War**	MicroProse
9	**UFO: Enemy Unknown**	MicroProse
10	**Harpoon 2**	Electronic Arts

Top 5 CD-ROM Games

1	Outpost	Sierra
2	Theme Park	Bullfrog
3	UFO: Enemy Unknown	MicroProse
4	Rebel Assault	LucasArts
5	TFX	Ocean

- **These charts are kindly supplied by Virgin Megastores.**

It's Live '94!

The biggest consumer electronics show the UK has ever seen is almost upon us. Live '94 takes place on September 20th-25th at Earls Court in London, a glittering showcase featuring not just games, but TV, Hi-Fi and video technology.

There will be a Games Arcade run by EMAP (the publishers of PC GAMES) and visitors will be able to sample the latest PC releases, watch celebrity game challenges on the stage and participate in a variety of seminars discussing topics such as electronics, home cinema, camcorders and, of course, games. Journalists from EMAP will be among the many speakers.

PC GAMES will also be making an appearance at the show (probably in the bar area), and so if you want to come along to join in the fun, get there nice and early. Admission prices are £4 for adults on a weekday and £7 at the weekend. The price for children (accompanied by an adult) is a mere £3. Of course, you can always book in advance by calling the Live '94 ticket hotline on (0891) 500103. See you there...

LIVE '94

GET YOUR FINGER ON THE PULSE

Bargain Bucket!

Millennium is set to release a whole series of five compilation CDs featuring a selection of its hits from yesteryear. For just £24.99 there's the Sci-Fi Pack 1 (Resolution 101 & Steel Empire), Sci-Fi Pack 2 (Global Effect & Strike II) and Adventure Pack (Robin Hood & Rome), while at £29.99 there's the Platform Pack (Robocod, Horror Zombies From The Crypt & Cloud Kingdoms) and Arcade Pack (Brutal Sports Football & Moonshine Racers). They should be in the shops any day now...

Fantasy That...

Fans of the Fantasy Football TV show starring Frank Skinner and David Baddiel — and it seems there were a lot of you — will no doubt be ecstatic to learn that Playtime is developing a tie-in computer game called — wait for it — Skinner & Baddiel Fantasy Football. Quite how the game will work, seeing that the whole premise of the TV show was based on results of footy matches coming in week-by-week as they happened, is a mystery at the moment, but we're intrigued if nothing else...

Ski Anyday!

Due next month from Mindscape is SuperSki III. Employing an attractive texture-mapped 3D view (but then, when isn't a 3D view texture-mapped these days?) to depict the action, SuperSki III is a comprehensive simulation of all things ski-related, including downhill racing, hot-dogging, slalom and ski-jumping. You may never have to smear your nose in zinc cream again!

Just When You Thought It Was All Over...

Remember how we were all told that CD-ROM would put an end to piracy forever? Well, it seems we were told wrong. Recently investigators with the Crime Unit of ELSPA (the European Leisure Software Publishers Association) and officers from the Greater Manchester Police raided two Manchester addresses and discovered CD-ROM writing equipment and in excess of 200 CD-ROM discs with a street value of over £500,000. Oh dear...

Flintstones! Meet The...

Core Design's attack on the PC market continues this Autumn with B.C. Racers, a fun 3D game in which players race crazy prehistoric vehicles over an assortment of texture-mapped tracks, lobbing boulders at each other and whacking their rivals with clubs. If its even remotely as enjoyable as SuperMario Kart on the Super NES (which it closely resembles) then it should be a right hoot...

Team **Talk**

Who are the geezers who write PC GAMES? And just what's taken their fancy this month? All is revealed below...

David Upchurch

Editor

"I know it's a bit sad, but it's been our coverdisk demo of BreakThru! that's been getting me hot under the collar this month. I've always been partial to a spot of Tetris and this is just as insanely addictive. I just wish I could get that annoyingly catchy game tune out of my head..."

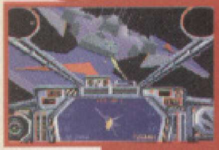
Dean Evans

Assistant Editor

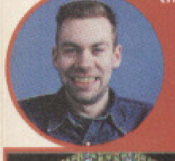
"I've been waiting for DID's Inferno for a long time and although Alex thinks that the hero sounds a bit like John Inman (which he does not), I'm going to be battling through the 700 missions until the Rexxon scum are vanquished. Or, I might just go down to the pub. Drink anyone?"

Alex Fraser

Staff Writer



"I've been finding it hard to tear myself away from Theme Park, but when TIE Fighter arrived in the office I just had to load it up and get playing. It's a change to be playing a bad guy for a change — they're always so much more interesting than the goodies."

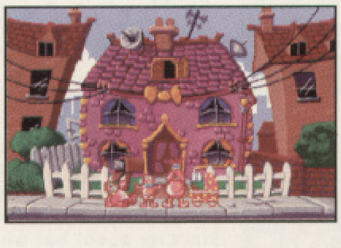


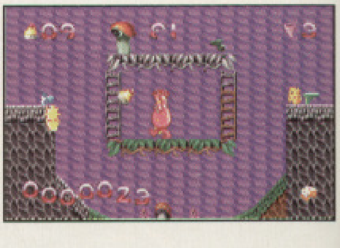
David Kelsall

Art Editor

"I've been playing Head Over Heels, Lords Of Midnight and Jet Set Willy on the Spectrum (well, it's a Spectrum emulator on the PC). I don't want to waffle on like a real saddo but it was really good fun playing all the old classics that have influenced many of the games we play today."

Blobby! **Blobby! Blobby!**



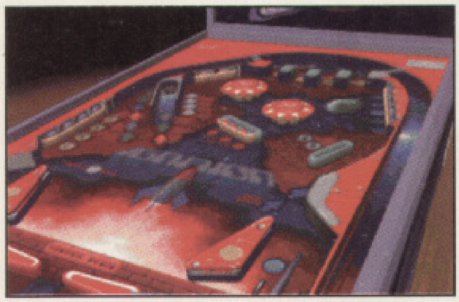


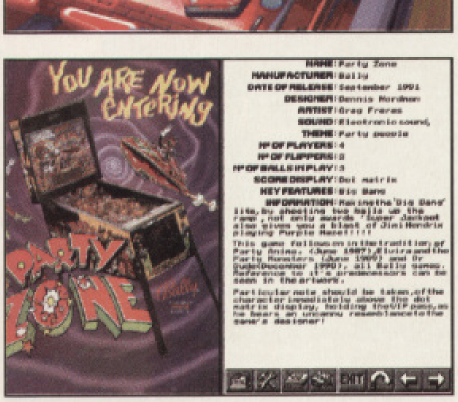
Just when you thought it was safe to enter Crinkley Bottom... Yes, Mr Blobby returns this Autumn in the new series of Noel's House Party, to once again spread his special brand of pink-'n'yellow chaos across the TV screens of Britain. And come Christmas, you'll be able to play the Mr Blobby game on your PC, courtesy of Millennium. (Thanks, Millennium.)

The game takes the form of a simple yet entertaining arcade platform romp. The normally colourful Blobby World has been turned dull and grey by some evil so-and-so — John Major, perhaps? (Oooh, little bit of satire — Ed) — so Mr Blobby has to run around the monochrome landscapes painting everything back to normal (or as normal as things in Blobby World can get, anyway).

And, of course, there are nasties which get in his way, spike pits and lava pools to be avoided and bonuses and power-ups to be collected — you know the score. There are bonus levels too, in which Mr Blobby has to collect as many goodies as possible within a strict time limit.

Millennium, paraphrasing the old Ronco telly ads, claims that it's the perfect Christmas gift, especially as it'll be released at an almost-budget price of around£20. Well, it beats yet another pair of socks, I suppose...





NAME: Party Zone
MANUFACTURER: Bally
DATE OF RELEASE: September 1991
DESIGNER: Dennis Nordman
ARTIST: Greg Freres
SOUND: Electronic sound,
THEME: Party people
Nº OF PLAYERS: 4
Nº OF FLIPPERS: 3
Nº OF BALLS IN PLAY: 3
SCORE DISPLAY: Dot matrix
KEY FEATURES: Big Bang
INFORMATION: Making the 'Big Bang' lite, by shooting two balls up the ramp, not only awards 'Super Jackpot' also gives you a blast of Jimi Hendrix playing Purple Haze!!!!

This game follows on in the tradition of Party Animal. (June 1987), Elvira and the Party Monsters (June 1989) and Dr Dude (December 1990). all Bally games. Reference to it's predecessors can be seen in the artwork.

Particular note should be taken, of the character immediately above the dot matrix display, holding the VIP pass, as he bears an uncanny resemblance to the game's designer!

More **Balls!**

21st Century's obsession with the favourite pub pastime of pinball continues to grow unabated. Hot on the heels of Pinball Dreams 2 comes Pinball Dreams Deluxe for PC CD-ROM, which is basically every table from Pinball Dreams 1 and 2 brought together on one CD and tarted up with a smart ray-traced intro.

More interesting — at least from the pinball fanatic's point of view — is the inclusion of an interactive 'history of pinball', which contains loads of info on famous pinball tables past and present.

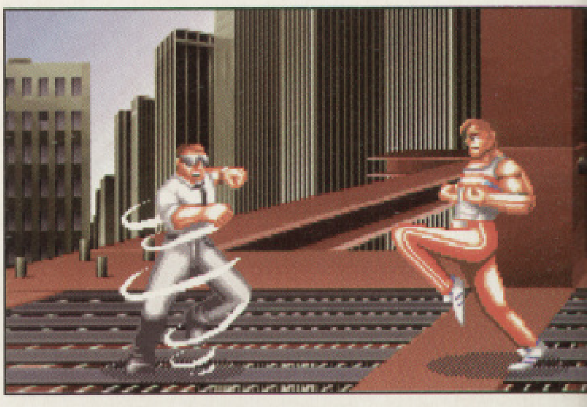
Pinball Dreams Deluxe costs £39.99 and should be in the shops now. Oh, and good news — 21st Century has got even more pinball games planned for later in the year.

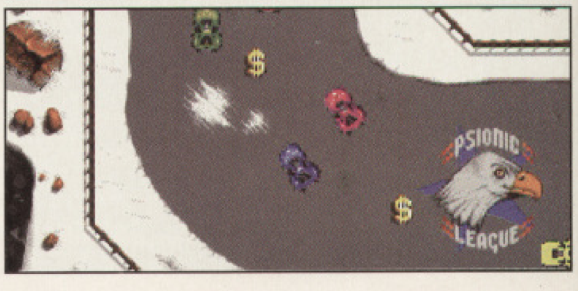
The **Ultimate Body!**

You'd best be prepared for the fight of your life next month, because that's when Team 17 will be unleashing Ultimate Body Blows on an unsuspecting world.

A sequel to the popular beat-'em-up Body Blows (really — Astonished reader), Ultimate Body Blows offers you a total of 21 rock-hard geezas that you bash against each other in a whole range of tournaments and championships against either the computer or up to eight mates.

In a slightly lighter vein is Overdrive, a top-viewed arcade racing game in the Super Sprint mould. Featuring eight types of car (Grand Prix, Sports, 4x4 and Dirt Track) twenty circuits and the ability to play head-to-head over a serial link-up, this looks set to do just as well on the PC as it did on the Amiga when it was unveiled about a year ago. Expect this one in about a month's time too.





Invention Corner!

If all the rumours are correct, the next few months will see veritable VR explosion on the humble PC. After all the whinging and complaining about the fact that there isn't any cheap Virtual Reality gear available for the PC, it seems that no fewer than three such headsets are due to make an appearance before the year is out. It's bloody typical... you wait ages for one to come along and then three arrive at the same time!

The Forte Technologies VFX1 headset that PC GAMES tried out in Issue One is now tentatively set for a November launch and, while no fixed UK price has been set, Forte plan to sell the VFX1 in the US for a mere $900. Unconfirmed reports suggest that Origin is already making provision to support the VFX1 with forthcoming games like System Shock promising full VR compatibility.

Illinois-based VictorMaxx are also producing a PC-compatible VR headset and, according to CTW, the games industry trade paper, the CyberMaxx is already being manufactured and VictorMaxx plan to launch the headset worldwide in September, priced at $700 or £499.

Lastly, Astounding Technologies are about to chip in with the Astounding 2001 Virtual Reality Video Visor. Although it's not strictly a PC-compatible VR headset, the 2001 (pictured right) plugs into your TV, video or camcorder, allowing you to watch your favourite shows in an entirely new dimension.

With a $795 price tag, we'll have to wait and see whether this lightweight headset poses a serious challenge to both the VFX1 and the CyberMaxx.

For more information about the VFX1 headset call Forte Technologies on (0101) 716 427 8595; for details on the CyberMaxx, contact VictorMaxx on (0101) 708 267 0007; and for information about the 2001 Video Visor call Astounding on (0101) 800 278 6863.

● Until now there were only two ways to experience video games: sight and sound. But suppose you could feel the action that you've been seeing and hearing in your favourite games?

Yes, this is the intriguing question posed by Aura Systems as it attempts to sell its Interactor games 'vest' to gamesplayers all over America.

The Interactor simply connects to the audio output socket on your PC and, as the action breaks out on the screen, the adjustable vest actively converts the bass sound waves from the game you're playing into body-pulsing vibrations — you can 'feel' bullets hit you and explosions, er, explode.

For more information on the Interactor vest, fax Aura Systems on (0101) 310 643 8846.

● ***Last month the Bluepoint contact number for the Red-Eye joypads and IDE CD drive was incorrectly printed, it is actually (0907) 277007. Sorry.***

Car **Sick?**

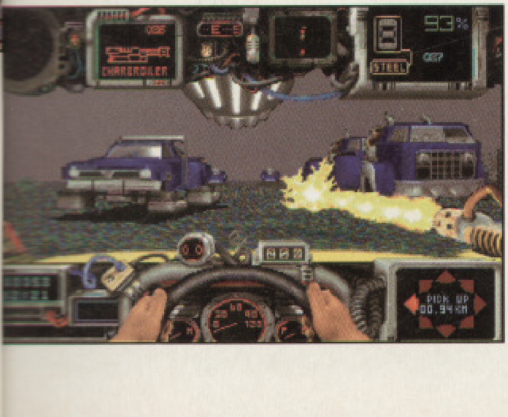
While driving have you ever had the perversely sick urge to mount the pavement and mow down a few pedestrians? Yeah? Then you'll *lurve* Quarantine, a 3D blast-'em-up that can best be described as Doom meets Escape From New York meets Mad Max.

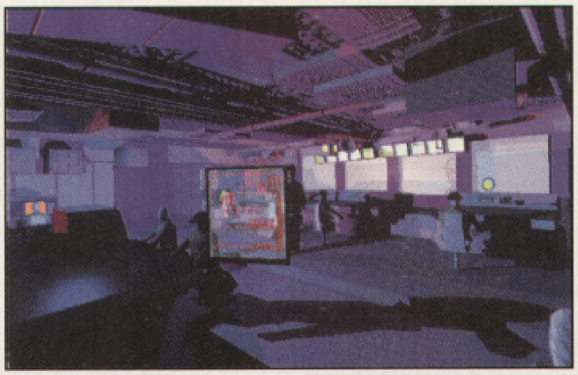
The game is set in the city of Kemo, a place so violent that it's been sealed off and turned into a giant prison, becoming a dumping ground for the world's scum. You play Drake Edgewater, a cab driver who dreams of escaping Kemo and starting a new life in the world outside.

Fortunately, you've got a plan for getting out. Trouble is, you'll need a lot of cash to put it into action — and the only way to earn money in Kemo is by carrying out tasks for the various hoods who live there.

What this all boils down to in gameplay terms is lots of fast driving around Wolfenstein-style 3D streets, blasting other vehicles with your cab's front-mounted cannons and running over any hoodlums stupid enough to venture out into the streets on foot.

It all sounds like a lot of fun — look out for it this October on the GameTek label.





Sea **Here!**

If you've ever fancied a life on the ocean waves, commanding a heavily-armed cruiser as it sails into trouble spots around the world, then Ticonderoga may be just what you're looking for. Created by Intelligent Games for PC CD-ROM, it's an accurate simulation of modern naval warfare which has been in development now for over a year.

As Captain of a Ticonderoga-class cruiser, the player faces a varied range of challenging missions, including the recapturing an oil tanker which has been boarded by terrorists, defending US installations against attack by a South American dictator and attacking weapons bases on the Iraqi mainlaind.

Unlike many similar games, which tend to be a bit 'dry' to say the least, Intelligent Games hope to bring the world of a Navy Captain to life via the use of an innovative first-person interface, to heighten the feeling of actually 'being there'.

Interestingly, Ticonderoga also features many computer-controlled 'non-player' characters, and success in a mission depends just as heavily on how the player interacts with them as it does on his tactical and strategic decisions.

Ticonderoga will be launched towards the end of this year by Mindscape, price to be announced.

You Have 20 Seconds To Comply...

Also from Core Design — but not due to hit the shelves until early next year — is Battlecorps. It's essentially a texture-mapped 3D blast, with the player guiding a two-legged walker (much like the ED-209 in Robocop) across various alien terrains zapping, er, aliens and so forth. It was originally developed for the Mega CD, where it racked up incredible review scores. Sounds good to us...

Trains, Planes and... Submarines?

This month sees no less than three CD releases winging their way out from MicroProse's HQ. Falcon Gold lumps the original Falcon 3.0 flight sim plus all the data disk add-ons onto one CD, while Wild Blue Yonder is an exciting multimedia extravaganza illustrating the history of the jet plane. Finally, submarine fans might like to know that Subwar 2050 has been reissued on CD and not only features a new, bug-fixed version of the game but, more importantly, it includes two new scenarios and 20 brand new missions. Of course, all the new missions will be available as a separate upgrade disk for those of you who already own the game.

And Don't Forget...

PC GAMES is now monthly! As mentioned elsewhere, the next issue will be on-sale on the 6th of October. Be there!

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Chicago

Your kind of Windows?

Is Microsoft's new baby, Windows 4, your passport to 32-bit gaming *or* will it cause you more problems than MS-DOS did? Dean Evans takes a cautious glance..

I am a great fan of Windows, but when it comes to running games I'm with the little white C:\ prompt and the jet black screen. Apart from a handful of commercial titles — notably Gabriel Knight and Outpost — Windows is a boring place, devoid of high quality gaming excitement and merely the province of Lotus 1-2-3, Wordperfect, Paintbrush and the adrenaline-pumping ecstasy of Solitaire and Minesweeper.

Despite high hopes, Windows has never really got to grips with games software. Of course, this is fair enough. It wasn't actually designed to run modern programs like TIE Fighter and Theme Park — the speed of the graphics (or, more appropriately, the lack of it) in Windows 3.1 has been the single most important obstacle keeping developers away.

But with the forthcoming release of Windows 4 — or Chicago, as it's affectionately known — Microsoft has announced that things will be a little different. Like SVGA graphics cards and the CD-ROM drive, Windows 4 is an advance you just won't be able to ignore because Microsoft intends to transform its quiet collection of icons and resizable boxes into a great environment for playing computer games.

It's Windows! And it's 4!

"Microsoft is committed to delivering top-notch multimedia functionality in Windows," enthuses Brad Chase at Microsoft, "and games are one of the largest, most important categories of multimedia applications. Because of the installed base of more than 40 million Windows-based machines, the forthcoming 32-bit capabilities of Microsoft Windows 'Chicago,' and the games tools we have announced, we believe the Windows family of operating systems offers great opportunities for games developers."

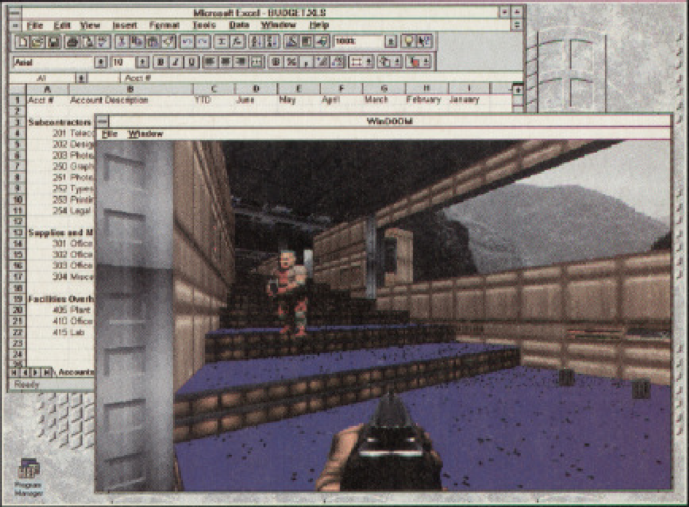
Forgetting about the mechanics of Chicago (they really are very dull), on a visual level Windows 4 isn't *that* different to Windows 3.1. There are still the familiar program groups and icons, but Chicago has fully-shaded 3D graphics, provision for long filenames and minimised applications show up on a task bar at the bottom of the screen. Chicago focuses on documents rather than individual files.

But where Windows 3.1 was just a powerful DOS front-end with some pretty boxes, Windows 4 could herald a giant PC games revolution. You see, unlike the current version of Windows that is sitting on your hard disk, Chicago is a complete operating system in itself — it doesn't enhance MS-DOS and make it easier to use, it actually replaces it.

Windows 4 is effectively a GUI (Graphical User Interface) version of MS-DOS 7; a new 32-bit, multi-tasking, icon-driven operating system that opens up a whole new area of possibilities for PC games. At the moment your PC can only run 16-bit games like FIFA Soccer and Outpost, but with Chicago and its dedicated games system 'WinG', developers will be able to produce *32-bit* software; faster, bigger and better games, running in a resizable window unhindered by the tiny 640K base memory limit and those niggly expanded memory problems.

> "WinG performance, plus new features in Windows 'Chicago,' make Windows a great computer-game environment,"
>
> David Stafford,
> President of Cinematronics.

So, it's WinG that I'm particularly interested in because the WinG tools are being made available now for use with Windows 3.1. According to Microsoft, WinG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202 Design
203 Photo
250 Graph
251 Photo
252 Types
253 Printi
254 Legal
Supplies and M
301 Office
302 Office
303 Office
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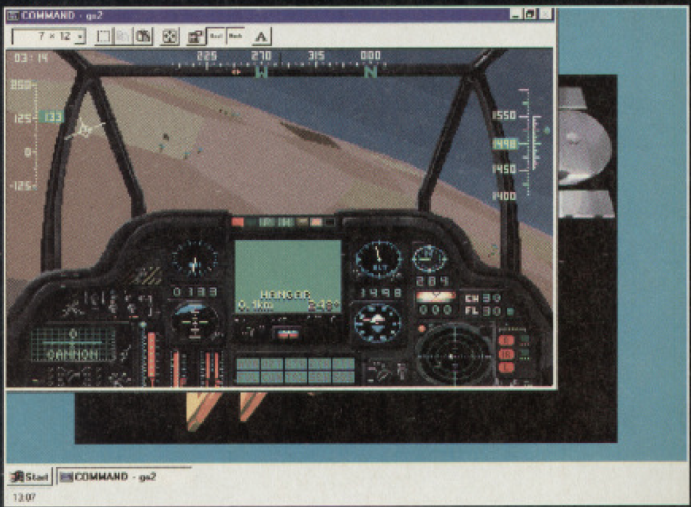
Facilities Overh
405 Plant
410 Office
415 Lab
Accounts
Ready
WinDOOM
File Window

(Above) Id Software's conversion of Doom to Windows proves that potentially WinG has a great future. Better still, WinDoom will be available for Windows 3.1 and 3.11 For Workgroups by Christmas. Now you can chainsaw soldiers and do your accounts at the same time.

(Below) Gunship 2000 in a window anyone? This was one of many older PC games that ran quite happily under Windows Chicago with very little loss of speed.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CANNON
Start
COMMAND - gs2
13:07

promises to offer speed and responsiveness dramatically better than was previously possible with Windows — graphic speed even comparable to the performance of your current MS-DOS operating system.

And if you, me or indeed anyone in the gaming fraternity needed convincing of WinG's potential, Id are already testing a prototype version of Doom that runs just as fast and just as happily under Windows 3.1 as it does under DOS.

According to Jay Wilbur at Id Software, the process of transferring Doom to Windows was very easy. "John Carmack, the chief architect of Doom, and others ported the core Doom game to Windows in about two days, and boy, did it look ➡

good!" Exclaims Wilbur. "We plan to have a full version od Doom for Windows ready for Christmas."

But while some developers will doubtless produce WinG games for Windows 3.1, exploiting the massive installed base of Windows and Windows For Workgroups users, Microsoft expects that most developers will skip directly to Chicago because they will be able to create entirely new types of games.

"For example," suggests Brad Chase, "the extra performance of the 32-bit architecture of Windows 'Chicago,' as well as multi-threading, networking and built-in support for high-performance digital video, could add up to some dazzling multi-player games."

Okay, what exactly *is* WinG?

I'm glad you asked. WinG is a set of graphics tools that provide a Windows game with close to the graphic performance of an MS-DOS based counterpart. Basically, it's a graphics engine that allows software developers to produce Windows games without rewriting huge chunks of game code. It makes programming Windows games a damn sight easier. Apparently.

> "the windows-based pc is destined to become the primary information and entertainment device in the home. the wing library will help make windows the premier platform for games."
>
> Ron Whittier,
> Senior Vice President of Intel Corporation.

Available in both 16- and 32-bit versions, the system supports all major graphics resolutions and offers off-screen video buffering but, most importantly, Windows memory management smashes the 640K conventional memory barrier, freeing up all the PC's 32-bit addressable memory and eliminating the need to fiddle with **CONFIG.SYS** files in order to get games up and running.

And if that wasn't good enough, WinG also has built-in Digital Video Support allowing FMV footage to be played back on a standard VGA card; the networking facility, WinSockets, allows developers to write games for Novell and Windows For Workgroups networks; VoiceView modem technology allows you to play modem games and talk to your opponent in the same phone call and finally support for joysticks, mice and other control devices is incorporated into the Chicago structure.

Hey, it sounds great...

Yes, it does, but there could be a few teething troubles. Obviously the popularity of MS-DOS games like Doom is a major issue for Microsoft, because theoretically if you replace your current version of DOS with Chicago, there is suddenly no DOS operating system resident on your PC. Chicago's 32-bt O/S merely *emulates* the old 16-bit DOS, so will all your old MS-DOS games still work with it?

Microsoft assures us that they will, but imagine if the brand-spanking new version of Windows 4 that you've just gone and spent £50 on, has installed over your old DOS O/S and now you can't run any of your old games. Will your prized games collection suddenly become incompatible and just so much plastic packed in pretty cardboard boxes, or will Microsoft sort it out?

Unfortunately, we don't yet know. While the version of Windows 4 that I looked at had no problem running old games like Gunship 2000 and X-Wing, games that featured the new DOS/4GW extender were a tad more temperamental. In fact, this is a bit of an understatement — very few of the games actually worked and those that I could get a bit of life out of, like TIE Fighter, ran incredibly slowly indeed. It was like dogfighting X-Wings in treacle.

Admittedly, while incompatibility problems are worrying, it's still early days and Microsoft have still got a ton of work to do before Chicago is finished, debugged and unleashed upon the world.

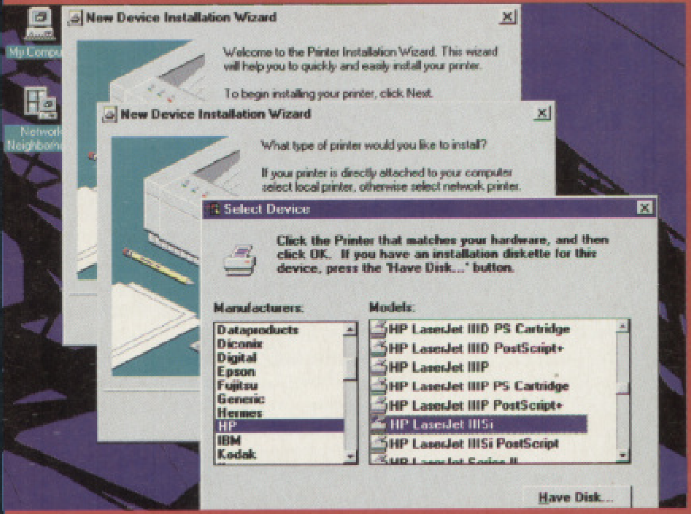
Whatever happens, I'm content to watch and wait. Of course I'll nip out to get Chicago once the problems are ironed out and I fully suspect that you will too. Windows Chicago: a system that finally kills off the 640K barrier, banishes EMS and runs true 32-bit games? Yes please, Microsoft. Gimme. Gimme.

Plug & *Play*

Microsoft have been working hard to make Chicago both easy to use and easy to install, because the PC still remains a mystery to most of us. As for whipping off the lid and tinkering around inside, it's enough to confuse almost anyone.

Fortunately, Chicago features some advanced auto-detect utilities that, for example, can recognise when you've installed a new soundcard and automatically assign it a free IRQ and an appropriate DMA channel. The system is called Plug & Play, a new standard that makes it easier for you to add devices such as CD-ROM drives or soundcards to your PC. It promises to be a technical breeze; no mucking about with jumpers, no I/O conflicts, no problems.

As the Plug & Play features of Windows Chicago eliminate the need for you to configure any new piece of hardware you install, with any luck it will put an end to compatibility conflicts for good. Just as long as manufacturers produce Plug & Play compatible cards, that is.


My Compu
Network Neighbor
New Device Installation Wizard
New Device Installation Wizard
Select Device
Have Disk...

Welcome to the Printer Installation Wizard. This wizard will help you to quickly and easily install your printer.

To begin installing your printer, click Next.

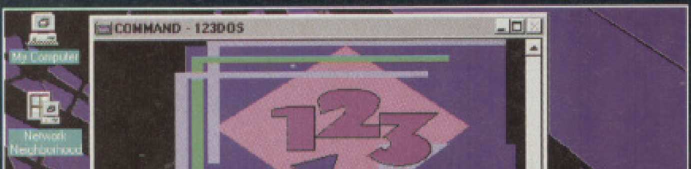
What type of printer would you like to install?

If your printer is directly attached to your computer select local printer, otherwise select network printer.

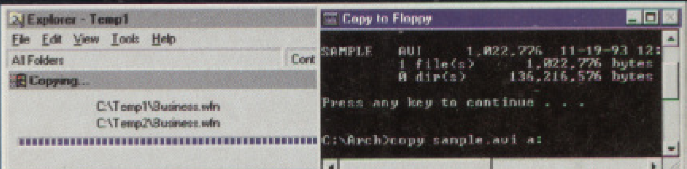
Click the Printer that matches your hardware, and then click OK. If you have an installation diskette for this device, press the 'Have Disk...' button.

Manufacturers:
- Dataproducts
- Diconix
- Digital
- Epson
- Fujitsu
- Generic
- Hermes
- HP
- IBM
- Kodak

Models:
- HP LaserJet IIID PS Cartridge
- HP LaserJet IIID PostScript+
- HP LaserJet IIIP
- HP LaserJet IIIP PS Cartridge
- HP LaserJet IIIP PostScript+
- HP LaserJet IIISi
- HP LaserJet IIISi PostScript



Windows Chicago is no longer just a front-end for DOS, it's an operating system in its own right. Microsoft claim that all existing DOS software will eventually run under Chicago...



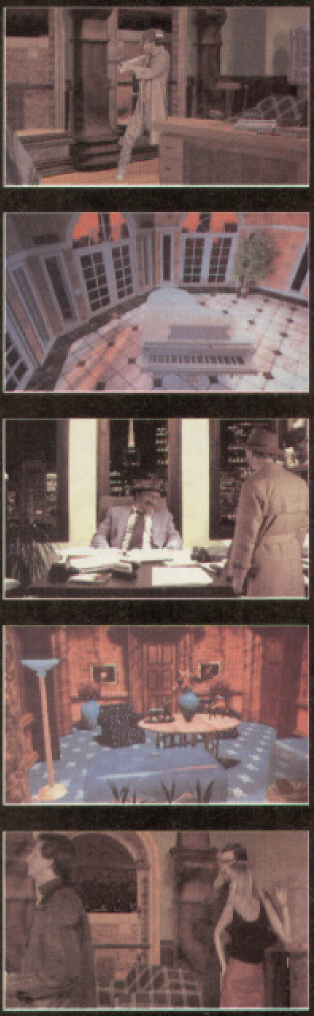
C:\Temp1\Business.wfn
C:\Temp2\Business.wfn

```
SAMPLE   AUI      1,022,776  11-19-93 12:
         1 file(s)     1,022,776 bytes
         0 dir(s)    136,216,576 bytes

Press any key to continue . . .

C:\Arch>copy sample.aui a:
```

Multi-tasking allows Chicago to run more than one application at once. For example, you can copy disks in one window, run DOS in another and even watch FMV footage in a third.

THE FIRST TRULY INTERACTIVE MOVIE

UNDER A Killing Moon



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CD-ROM AND MULTIMEDIA NOW

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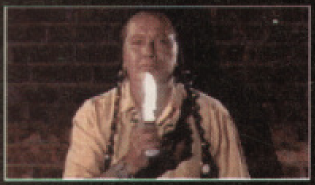
PC REVIEW

"ONE THAT'S GOING TO BE WORTH WAITING FOR"
PC POWER

FEATURING...



RUSSELL MEANS
(THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS, NATURAL BORN KILLERS)

BRIAN KEITH
(PARENT TRAP, HARDCASTLE & MCCORMICK, YOUNG GUNS)

MARGOT KIDDER
(SUPERMAN I & II)

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SEGA
Game
AM2
Speed King
GOOD
HORNET
HIGH-CLASS
41
23

With a pocket full of change and a 10ft serial cable, Dean Evans searchs for the ultimate multi-player experience.

Imagine this simple scenario. You've just bought TIE Fighter from LucasArts. You've eagerly ripped the cellophane wrapper off the box on the No. 23 bus and you've absorbed the plot, memorised the flight controls and even glanced at the installation procedure by the time you get home. Of course, you then spend the next week avidly playing it, happily identifying containers, shattering lumbering Y-Wings and annoying everyone around you by humming the catchy theme tune.

After a couple of days, you start to learn how the game works. You begin to notice patterns. For example, which missiles are most effective against the Assault Transports, which way a B-Wing will turn in a dogfight, and which rebel craft you should destroy first in order to complete a particular mission.

And if things get a little tough, you can always switch on the 'invincibility' mode or even nudge the difficulty level down a notch to 'easy'. Does the computer complain? No. Not even a protesting beep.

Before you know it, dogfighting the Rebel Alliance becomes tiresome and routine. Of course, the A-Wings are always a bit tricky but, with laser cannons recharging at an 'increased rate' and a full complement of advanced torpedoes lashed to your TIE's underbelly, you soon find that you're on combat autopilot. The initial challenge has evaporated. Dying doesn't spur you on any more, it's more of a temporary inconvenience.

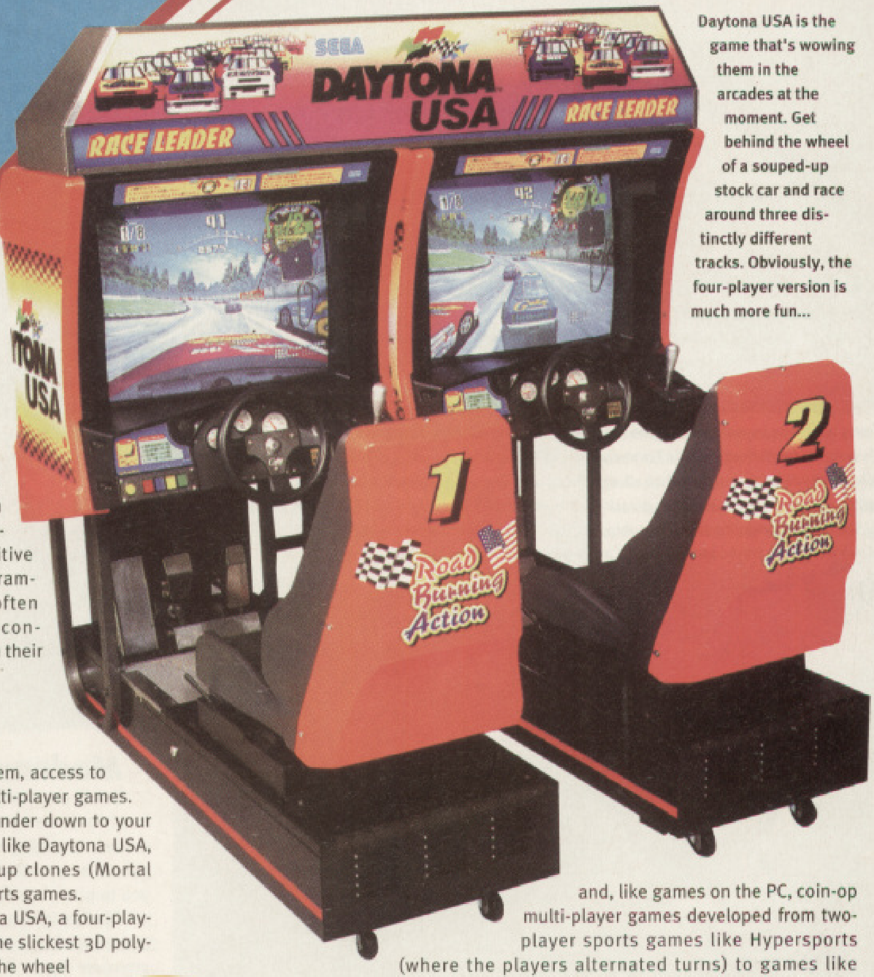
But what if LucasArts had developed a multi-player link for TIE Fighter? What if the computer wasn't in charge of the rebels but a real person was? Suddenly flying a fragile TIE Fighter against someone who's flying an X-Wing and knows how to use it is a more frightening prospect. Especially if they're right on your tail and you're piloting a TIE that doesn't have any shields...

Unfortunately, LucasArts is remaining resolutely tight-lipped about the possibility of such a link-up, but it's the actual idea of having multiple players that's interesting. Whether you're playing a two-player game like Street Fighter II, or a game in split-screen, via a serial cable, down a modem link or over a network, a multi-player option adds a whole new dimension to the way a game is played.

Take Doom, for example. Do you think so many people would still be playing it if the game didn't feature a multi-player mode? Okay, there are a host of editors, graphics and new levels floating about to keep the single-player occupied, but after you've had your fill of blasting imps and chainsawing sargents, the whole thing starts to get a bit dull.

But not if you play against another player. Or better still, three other players. You've got to be sharp, nimble and know the levels inside out to stay alive in multi-player Doom. Running around fighting other *people* is a another matter entirely. Imagine dogfighting a Spitfire pilot from Czechoslovakia? Or racing around Silverstone against an accountant from New York?

Doing it w



Daytona USA is the game that's wowing them in the arcades at the moment. Get behind the wheel of a souped-up stock car and race around three distinctly different tracks. Obviously, the four-player version is much more fun...

The attraction is the sheer unpredictability of a human opponent, the fact a person's actions aren't repetitive and guided by lines of programming code, but random and often totally unexpected. Computer-controlled opponents can't yet learn from their mistakes. People can.

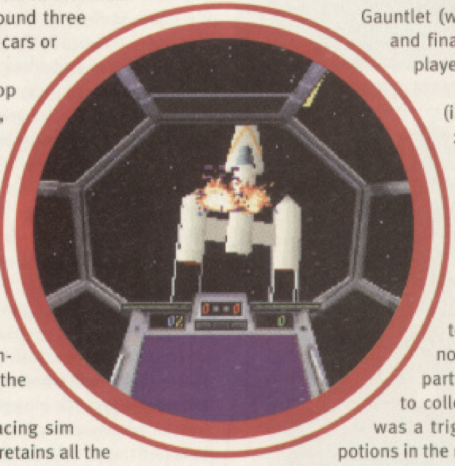
Game Over Player 1

Of course, you don't need to have a fast modem, access to a network or, for that matter, even a PC to play multi-player games. If you have a pocket full of change you can simply wander down to your local amusement arcade and play fast, frantic coin-ops like Daytona USA, Virtua Racing, Galaxians 3 or any number of beat-'em-up clones (Mortal Kombat, Virtua Fighters, StreetFighter, etc) and two-player sports games.

Currently wowing the arcade faithful is Sega's superb Daytona USA, a four-player racing game featuring texture-mapping, depth-queueing and the slickest 3D polygon technology you'll see this side of Christmas. Sitting behind the wheel of your souped-up racer, Daytona allows you to race around three different tracks, either on your own against the computer cars or in competition against up to three other players.

The custom 32-bit processors in the Daytona coin-op shift an amazing 300,000 polygons per second and, although the graphics are obviously the game's main talking point, it's the link-up option that justifies most of the interest.

Racing against three other cars you can legitimately try to bump your opponents off the road. Knock a car into a wall, for example, and sparks will fly as the metal scrapes along the concrete walls. As the race progresses, the bodywork will get damaged and the more damage your car sustains the more difficult it is to control. Imagine all this... racing against your friends, slamming round the track at close to 150mph and you've got the best adrenalin rush you can get for a quid.



Like Daytona, Virtua Racing is also a multi-player racing sim and although the polygon technology is a little cruder, it retains all the frantic, competitive gameplay. In fact, with Virtua Star Wars, eight-player Final Lap, Galaxians 3 and numerous other games, you can play against friends or complete strangers, have a great time and still have change out of a tenner for the bus ride home.

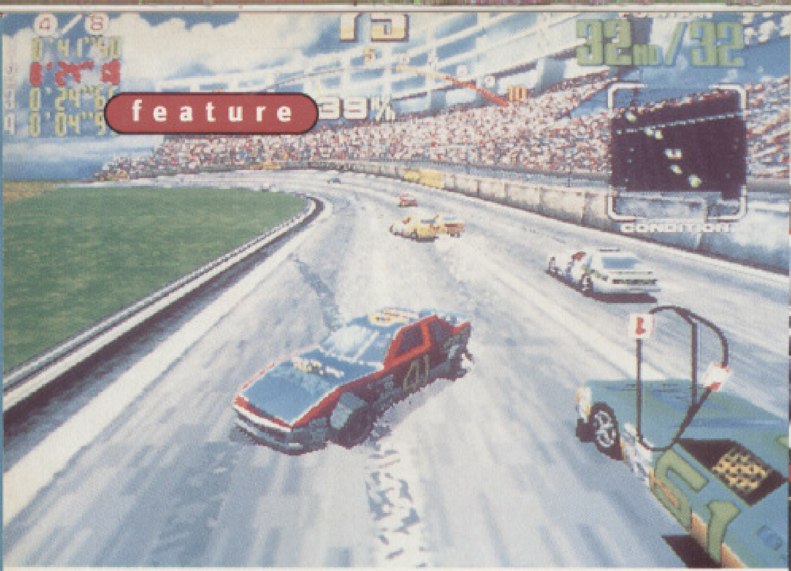
In fact, the idea of pitting one player against another originated in the arcades and, like games on the PC, coin-op multi-player games developed from two-player sports games like Hypersports (where the players alternated turns) to games like Gauntlet (where up to four players competed on the same screen) and finally to multiple player games like Daytona (where each player has their own screen).

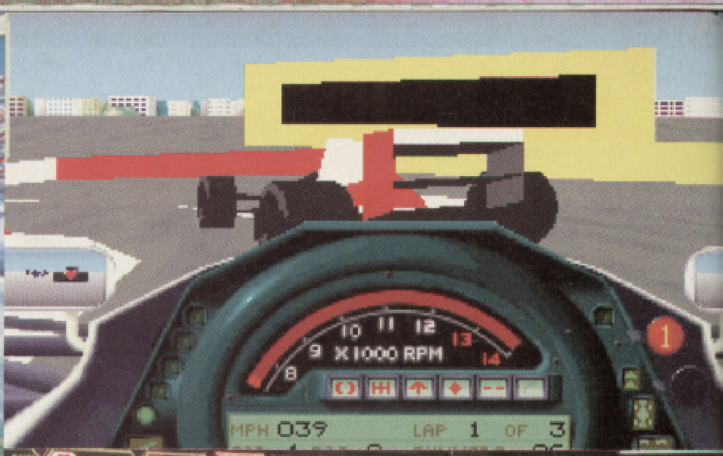
But while the multi-player aspect in two-player games (i.e the beat-'em-ups) is very basic — Player 1 hits Player 2, Player 2 hits Player 1 back, etc — the arrival of Gauntlet, a four-player fantasy romp through an isometric-3D castle, encouraged players not to shoot each other mercilessly but cooperate to progress through the game.

Like The Chaos Engine and Alien Breed, Gauntlet players needed to work together to survive, sharing power-ups and treasure along the way — it encouraged teamwork. Gauntlet was a tough challenge and there was no room for a selfish players, so, for example, if one of your party was wounded you had to protect them, allowing them to collect the vital health bonuses. The last thing you needed was a trigger-happy Elf running around stealing all the health potions in the name of point scoring and personal glory.

Sadly, Hypersports and Gauntlet aren't about to make a sudden comeback on the PC, but it's interesting to learn that Sega are to convert some of their 'mature' titles to PC CD-ROM. Whether this means that we'll be able to play Daytona, Virtua Star Wars or Virtua Racing in a couple of months is still unclear. Knowing our luck it's going to be Sonic, Voyeur and Sewer Shark. Ho-hum...

ith a friend





(Above) Four-way madness in Sega's stupendously good-looking Daytona USA only costs a quid...
(Above right) Geoff Crammond's Formula 1 Grand Prix can be played over a serial link, but it also has a nifty multi-player option that allows multiple players to play on the same PC.
(Right) Galaxians 3 lets six gunners rack up the points as a starship weaves through a spacebattle. Like Starblade you can't control the ship, you just have to score as many points as you can.
(Below) Bullfrog's forthcoming Magic Carpet promises multi-player options galore...

Modems? Who needs 'em?

But if you don't want to waste your money ploughing pound coins into arcade machines, and you haven't got a four-machine network or a fast 14,400-baud modem knocking about, you can still play against friends on your PC at home if the games in question have either a split-screen mode, or a link-up option that allows you to play via a serial cable.

Obviously two-player games like Sensible Soccer and The Chaos Engine can be played on the same screen quite easily, while games like Links 386 Golf neatly alternate 'turns' between multiple players. Okay, no problems so far. But with the big boom in first person perspective 3D games, playing cooperatively or head-to-head proved impossible on the same screen. The clever solution was to split the screen into two and allow both players to play at once.

The split-screen idea has since been applied to a wide range of games including driving games like the ancient Pitstop 2, the superb Spy Vs Spy on the Commodore 64 and more recently Gremlin's Lotus Turbo Challenge, Mindscape's Evasive Action and Origin's impressive Wing Commander Armada.

> **"My mother always said that you shouldn't play with yourself or you'll go blind. So multi-player games must be the future or I suppose we'll all be blind..."**
>
> **Martin Kenwright,**
> **Digital Image Design**

That said, there aren't actually that many games that employ the split-screen option (bar those mentioned above) and this is possibly due to the fact that even if you have a joystick plugged in, most PC game cards still only feature one standard joystick port — poor old player 2 is always forced to use the mouse or the keyboard and it's damned difficult flying a plane with the cursor keys, let me tell you.

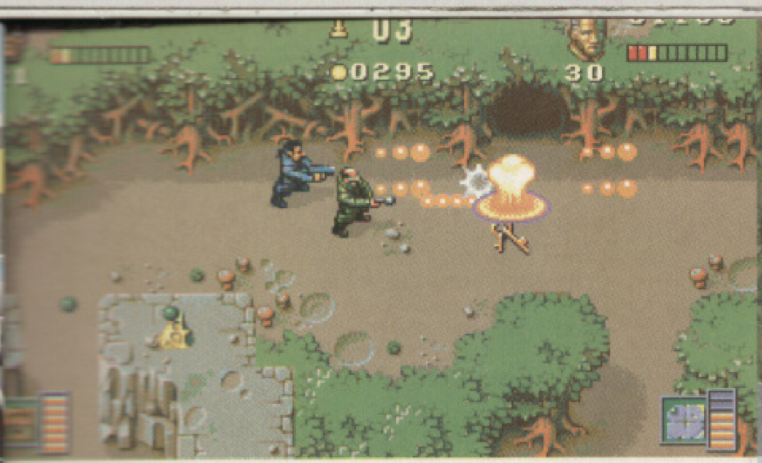
But Geoff Crammond's superb Formula 1 Grand Prix came up with an interesting solution to the control sharing problem. F1GP allows multiple players to take part in a race by splitting the race into individual player segments. For example, say you're racing against a friend but you've only got the one PC to play on. You can configure F1GP to 'swap' between cars a certain number of times during the race.

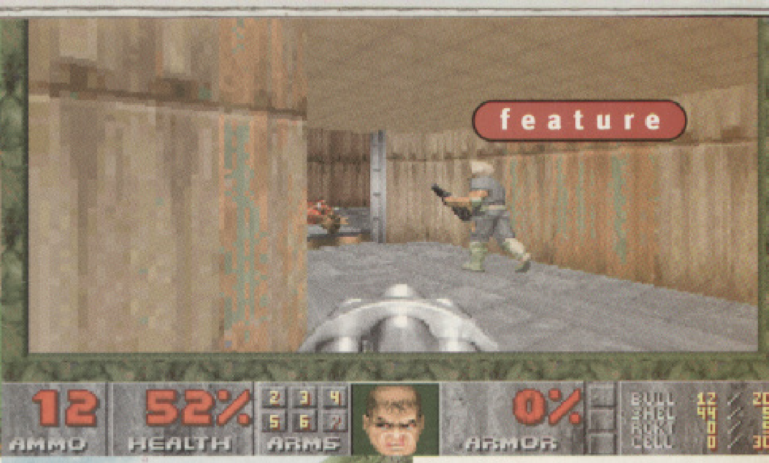
What this effectively means is that Player One drives for four laps, the computer then takes control of his/her car for the next four while Player Two drives another car. After four laps, the computer takes control of Player Two's car and control reverts back to Player One. And so on.

But, while this makes for tactical racing, by far the best way to play games like Evasive Action, F1GP, IndyCar Racing and Wing Armada is via a serial cable. It couldn't be easier. All you have to do is cart your PC round to a friend's house, buy an appropriate cable and play on two machines.

But while this is fine in theory, in reality if you haven't got a car and the friend in question lives 4 miles away, jumping on the bus

fire
Astro Base.
SPACE CADET.
Space Probe.
Jet dog





with a computer that's the size of a breeze-block isn't really a viable option.

But if you do have access to two PCs, linking the two together is a simple matter of plugging the cable into the same COM ports (i.e. COM 2) while the software gets on with the fiddly speed configuration and the data transfer. It's also very cheap — a serial cable will cost you about £10 and after that the only element missing is that handy extra known commonly as a 'friend'.

You vs Joe Public

If you have got a modem — and these days nothing less than a 9,600-baud model will suffice — you can not only play against other people across the country, but against opponents across the whole world. All that holds you back is finding a suitable adversary and financing the cost of the phone calls.

Of course, you've got to have something to play. Most flight sims these days incorporate a modem option and some games, like MicroProse's F15 III, allow one player to take control of the pilot while the other sits in the backseat and plays the role of the 'Wizzo' or weapons officer.

"It's all about ego trips, isn't it? Beating other people and then being smug about it. The right amount of smugness is very important."
Alex Fraser,
Doom veteran, PC GAMES

DID is currently working on a multi-player add-on for its highly acclaimed TFX, while IndyCar Racing, Wing Armada, SSN-21 Seawolf and, of course, Doom, are all being played *now* over the phone networks.

Usually, two-player head-to-head games are as easy to set up via modem as they are using a serial cable. Player 1 simply dials up Player 2 and, hopefully, the host program (i.e. IndyCar Racing, Doom, Falcon 3.0, etc) then takes charge of the intricate set-up mechanics. Once connected it's just like playing someone in the next room. The game may run a little slower, depending on the speed of your modem, but by then you're a fully paid-up member of the global multi-player gaming fraternity.

Contacting opponents is just as easy. Most players currently arrange head-to-head games on the major BBS systems like Compuserve and CIX. On Compuserve you can download the UK Doom list, a lengthy register of avid Doom players, that you can ring up, connect to and then chainsaw the hell out of. Players also organise tournaments and leagues amongst themselves that you can get involved in but, again, once you're on-line you'll have to check your local BBS for more information.

When you eventually get tired of head-to-head gaming, there's always the delights of *real* multi-player action to get your teeth into. On-Line is currently offering a number of large-scale multi-player games including Federation, a space domination and trading game; MUD2, a text-driven fantasy role-playing game and Air Warrior, a multi-player flight sim that can accommodate up to 65 flyers.

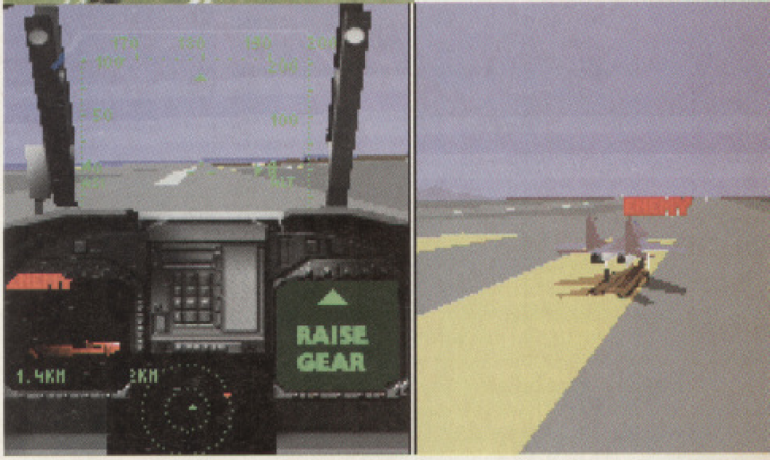
Of all these games, Air Warrior is without doubt the most prominent, and every night computer pilots from all over the country gather together to fly realistically modelled aircraft in real time over the phone lines.

In Air Warrior some players operate as lone fighter pilots while others combine forces and form into squadrons. It isn't just a game — Air Warrior has developed into a fully functioning military gameworld and community. For example, Mondays is jet night, Tuesdays is training, Wednesdays the campaigns start, etc. New players are warmly welcomed and although life for an Air Warrior rookie is tough, there is an official Air Warrior training academy where experienced players pass on their skills and tactics to newcomers.

On-line gaming in the UK still hasn't really taken off, partly due to the high cost of phone calls but mostly due to the fact that the government has placed a ban on BT and Mercury offering entertainment services over the phone networks.

Why have they done this? Well, it seems that this ban was enforced to allow the cable companies to mount a free attack on the market, encouraging them to invest in technology (on-line entertainment services, bulletin boards, video on demand services, etc) without

(Above left) Two players can play on the same screen in Renegade's The Chaos Engine. The idea here isn't to kill each other — you must cooperate to survive.
(Above) Cooperation? No thanks. Who needs friends when you've got a chaingun and Deathmatch Doom?
(Below) If you haven't got two PCs to hand, Evasive Action from Mindscape allows you to dogfight in a handy split-screen mode.



Draconian Leader
Aaaargh
EVIL DRACONIAN BASE
glue
Paint

fear of losing their multi-million pound investments to the two telecommunication giants.

Despite the ban, however, Mercury has formed a company called New Media Entertainment and fully intends to launch a national computer games network by the end of the year.

In an interview in The Times, Clyde Macveigh, the head of the new Mercury-owned company, explained that the service "will cost a couple of pounds an hour plus the cost of a local phone call. There will be no subscription charges so people will be able to come in and browse."

NME, which has bought the rights to use On-Line's Air Warrior game and numerous other titles, also claim that the network will support up to 65 people who will be able to log on and play games against each other simultaneously. Together with cheap-rate phone calls, the new setup has the potential to be very popular indeed.

Stuck in the MUD

But while all this high-tech, graphical nonsense is going on, Multi-User Dungeons are still quietly gathering followers in the background. MUDs, as they are known, were based on text adventures but created an artificial world, complete with wandering monsters, treasure, secret locations and a hierarchy of players ranging from powerful wizards and barbarians down to eager, naive adepts.

Obviously, the appeal of the MUD didn't lie in the presentation of the game (it was text only), it was the chance to play and interact with other people, to assume a fantastic persona and act out a fantasy quest. As such a MUD is much closer to the Dungeons & Dragons role-playing ideal than, say, Ultima Underworld or Eye Of The Beholder. What it lacked in the way of graphics it more than made up for in atmosphere and gameplay. MUD2, incidentally, is available as part of the On-Line games service.

But while MUDs are indeed very playable, they really haven't advanced a long way from where they were five years ago. However, now MOOs (MUD Object Orientated) have come along and they are threatening to drag the poor old MUD kicking and screaming into the modern adventuring age.

The main difference between a MUD and a MOO is that while a MOO retains the old idea of a virtual game-world, the players within it are allowed to create their own locations, rooms, tinkling waterfalls, etc. In fact, they can also create their own objects, traps and even their own non-player characters. Each player, in effect, is their own God, architect, genetic engineer and construction worker rolled into one.

MOO's are currently available over the Internet, and many of them are themed with the locations and surroundings reflecting the people who choose to inhabit them. Imagine science-fiction architecture for astronomy buffs and famous movie locations for film devotees. The possibilities are endless.

A flash in the pan?

Despite the proliferation of games featuring multi-player options, it's still too early to tell whether the whole thing will succeed or fail. Obviously, the question must be asked: are the software companies really interested in developing true multi-player and communications options?

"Origin will continue to pursue publishing games with a multi-player format in the future," assures David Swafford, Media Relations Manager at Origin. "Multi-player games are becoming more and more popular and Origin will strive to include this type of mode in future games. Of course, it will depend on whether the particular technology for that product permits it."

MicroProse too are confident that multi-player games are the way forward. "It is intended that all our flight and other simulations will have direct- and modem-link options," explains John Davis, Senior Product Manager at MicroProse UK. "We have already produced some games that have network and modem capability, but because this is an option that is not essential to the vast majority of our customers at the moment, these links do tend to be lower on the priority list when finishing a product."

As for the future, both MicroProse and Origin believe the idea of on-line gaming is going to very popular and will continue to grow.

"We are very aware that this is a growing sector of the market," continues John Davis. "We do not yet believe it is substantial, but we think that eventually it will grow at the accelerated rate that is typical of upgrades in the PC market such as CD-ROM drives, etc. To this end we will continue to incorporate direct and modem links and will be producing full network versions of both strategy and simulation games next year."

> **"The benefit of having multi-player options in a game is that it pits the player against a human opponent, and makes gamesplaying a more sociable activity..."**
> **Geoff Crammond, Creator of F1GP**

At Origin, David Swafford agrees: "Faster modems such as 14,400 baud are becoming more affordable and popular with customers, and these faster modems will increase the fun factor for gamers who are playing multi-player games. By it's nature a multi-player game does much to create more interactivity for the gamer, and that's Origin will be striving for, creating more interactivity in future multi-player games.."

So with such notables as 1942: Pacific Air War, Formula 1 Grand Prix 2, Rise Of The Robots, Theme Park, Super TFX, Battledrome, Zephyr, Magic Carpet, Colonization and several other titles in the development pipeline, if you want to try playing against a friend either via modem or serial cable, the choice promises to be wider than ever before.

The future's so bright...

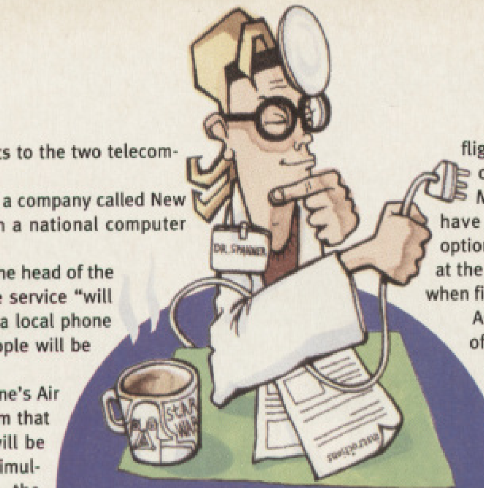
Okay, so you know the here and now, but with technology and game design moving faster than a cheetah strapped to a Japanese bullet train, where can multi-player gaming go from here?

In the US, Battletech centres have become very popular, where up to 25 people sit in huge metallic cockpits, controlling colossal robots locked in deadly battles on blasted wastelands. Virtual Reality promises to take gamesplayers to new realms of interactivity and the latest VR experience allows six people to take control of a virtual submarine, on a mission to recover the Loch Ness Monster's precious eggs (?).

But if a multi-player VR theme park seems a bit of science-fiction pipedream, on-line gaming on the Internet is definitely going to become a reality.

Everybody is talking about the much vaunted Information Superhighway — or 'Infobahn' as it's also known — and while the Internet and its various satellite systems are currently viewed purely as an information well, the digital highway also promises to offer unparalleled and cheap access to a wide variety of multi-player interactive entertainment.

With flight sims, sports games and strategy games poised to go 'live' on the net, multi-player options are getting bigger by the day. Even the best computer AI can't match the devious, cunning of a flesh-and-blood opponent, so whether you've got a friend with a serial cable or a 14,400-baud passport to Cyberspace, ultimately multi-player games *are* the way forward. Why not wait a while and hitch yourself a ride...?



DR SPANNERS *GUIDE TO...*

...Multi-Player Gaming On The Cheap

(1) Simply nip down to Tandy or any other high street computer/electrical store and get yourself a null-modem cable like the one shown below. It will cost you about £10.

(2) Buy a joystick splitter or Y-cable (also from Tandy) to play split-screen games without resorting to fiddly keyboard controls. Again, this will set you back about a tenner.

(3) Sharing the cost of any modem call is a good way to keep the expense down, and obviously if you play in the evenings or at the weekends you can take advantage of cheap rate phone tariffs.

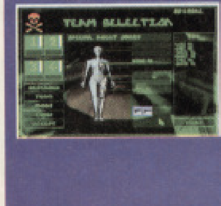
Those essential phone numbers

Compuserve UK
(081) 558 6114
CIX (081) 390 1244
On-Line (0734) 391064

MicroProse (0454) 326532
EA/Origin (0753) 549442
MIndscape (0444) 246333
Renegade (071) 481 9214

Doom is the most exciting, thrilling multi-player game around. You haven't really played until you've tried a four-way deathmatch.

Formula 1 Grand Prix, with its modem, serial and unique time-sharing options is an essential multi-player game.



Syndicate and the recent add-on disk, *American Revolt*, allow would-be world dominators to battle it out on the streets.

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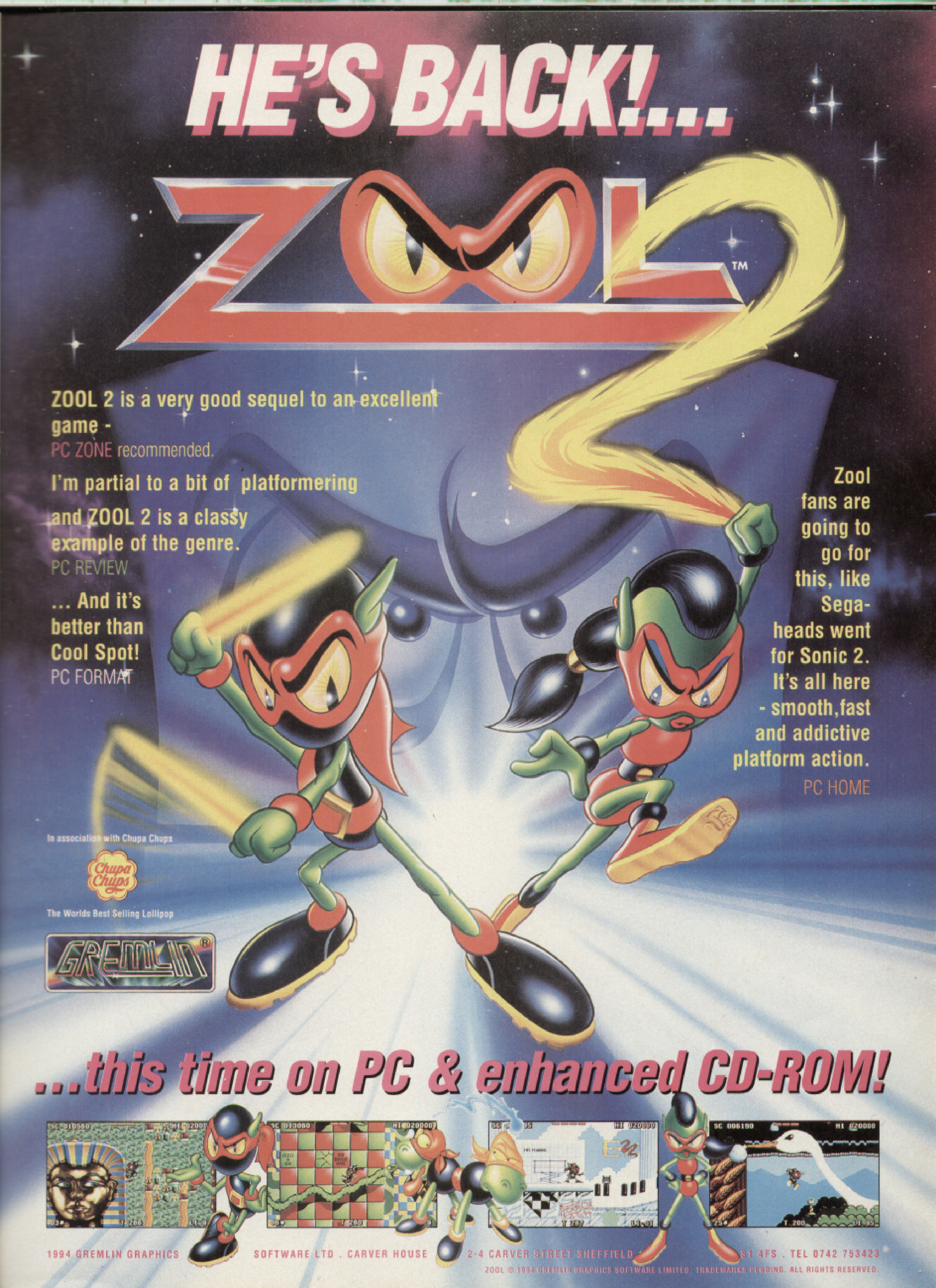

HE'S BACK!...

ZOOL 2 is a very good sequel to an excellent game -
PC ZONE recommended.

I'm partial to a bit of platformering and ZOOL 2 is a classy example of the genre.
PC REVIEW

... And it's better than Cool Spot!
PC FORMAT

Zool fans are going to go for this, like Sega-heads went for Sonic 2. It's all here - smooth,fast and addictive platform action.
PC HOME

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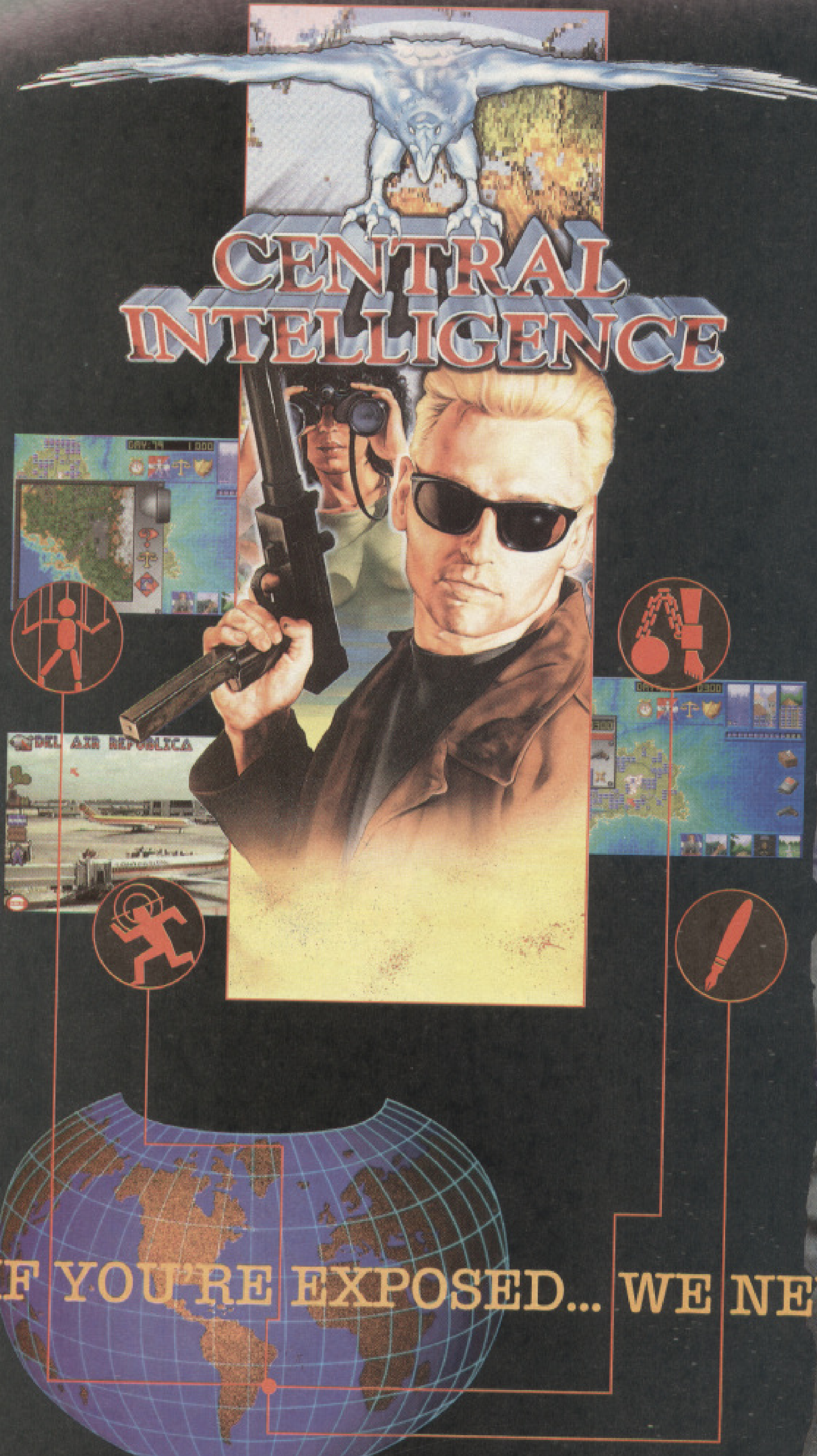

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

IF YOU FAIL...

YOU NEVER EXISTED

Utilising the massive storage capabilities of the CD ROM to construct complex and realistic scenarios, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE is the ultimate test of your strategic skills.

In this CIA style mission you can operate in three areas - Propaganda, Military and Political to achieve your objectives. Choose your moves carefully... you could set off a chain reaction of events that may back-fire.

The theatre of operation is immense.

IF YOU'RE EXPOSED... WE NEVER KNEW YOU.

"Versatility and engrossing gameplay combine to make CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE a thoroughly enjoyable and challenging epic."

****** - PC PLAYER**

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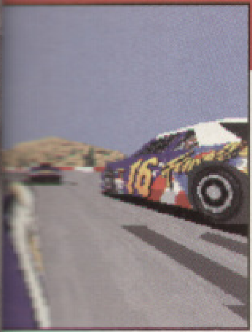
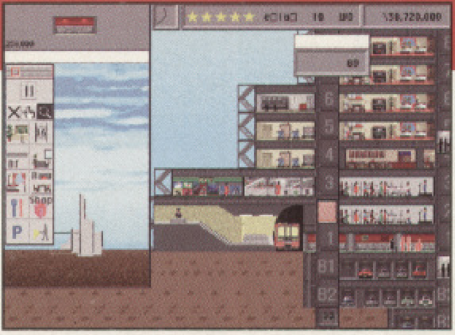
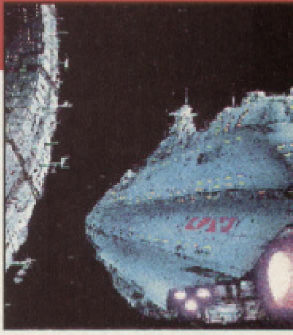
previews

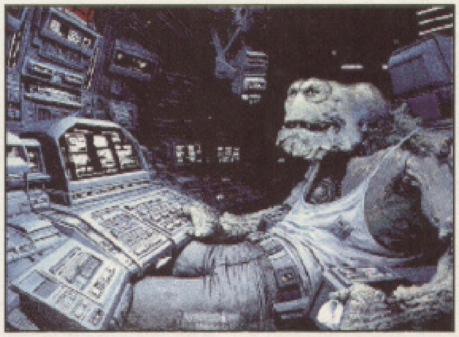
Even though the evenings have only just begun to draw in and the leaves haven't even started falling from the trees yet, already the softcos are preparing for the big Winter sales push otherwise known to you and me as Christmas. Mind you, based on what we've seen in development, you'd better start writing your note to Santa now — it's going to be a long one...

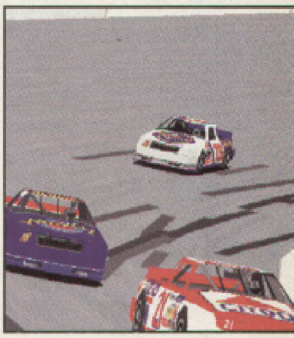






Conifer Forest





SIM TOWER.........30

We're all rabid Sim City 2000 fans here at PC GAMES, so you can imagine how excited we got when we heard that Maxis was working on a new sim called Sim Tower. And when we *saw* it — well! Suffice it to say, a trip to the trouser cleaners was called for. Only David Upchurch stayed fresh and dry to bring you this report...

WING COMMANDER 3.........32

Ever wondered what happened to Mark 'Skywalker' Hamill? Yeah, us to. Apparently he's the 'star' in Origin's forthcoming super-sequel, Wing Commander 3, a game which — so it's claimed — is so like being at the movies, you'll be able to smell popcorn while you're playing it. Dean Evans watches from the cheap seats...

UNIVERSE.........34

"The British are coming!" Yes, watch yer backs, LucasArts and Sierra, because here comes Core Design with its saucy-looking graphic adventure which may — just may — beat the American giants at their own game. David Upchurch boards the shuttle departing now from Gate 34...

NASCAR RACING.........36

Remember IndyCar Racing from Papyrus Software? Rather good, wasn't it? Well, now the Papyrus boys are back — bigger, better and bustier than ever before! (Are you sure about that last bit? — Ed.) Lucky old David Upchurch takes stock of their latest racing 'experience'...

COLONIZATION.........38

Sid 'Civilization' Meier (formerly known as Sid 'Railroad Tycoon' Meier) has probably had more hit games than you've had hot dinners — and it doesn't look like he's going to put a foot wrong with his next strategy epic. Dean Evans sets sail for 'our' Sid's New World...

ARMOURED FIST.........39

After the shoot 'em-up action of Commanche, Novalogic prepare to blast back into the games arena with Armoured Fist, a World War Two tank simulation that uses their very special Voxel-Spacing technology. Dean Evans, doesn't know where the 'fist' bit comes in but takes it for a spin anyway...

Scraping

Sim Tower is much more than just another Maxis Sim game — it's the first step towards the creation of a whole Sim World. David Upchurch takes the lift to the top floor and looks down...

Help! I've only just started to wean myself off Sim City 2000, and now Maxis announces its next title — Sim Tower, in which the player's task is to create the biggest and bestest skyscraper in the whole world. It's a doozy of an idea — but when am I going to get a chance to catch up on my sleep? Ah well...

In Sim Tower the towers you build are very akin to the massive arcologies which featured in Sim City 2000, which is to say that they're self-contained, self-sustaining 'mini-cities'. Starting with nothing but a cleared area of level ground and a whole lot of empty sky, you use a set of icon-based menus to click-'n'-place office units, shops, cinemas and so on, eventually creating huge residental areas, industrial zones, shopping centres and leisure complexes, all connected by a network of lifts — or 'elevators', as our American friends call them.

"The player's basic objective is to achieve a 'Tower Rating'," explains Mike Perry, Sim Tower's Producer, "which is judged upon the tower's profitability, the traffic through the tower and the tower's efficiency. They'll start at the bottom with a one-star rating, and as the tower grows they'll increase their rating — two-star, three-star and so on — until they reach a five star rating, which is the Ultimate Tower!

"As your rating increases the game gets more difficult. With a one-star rating you're limited as to what you can build into your tower. You start off with a basic lobby, which is the entrance point for everybody to get into the tower, and then you can place offices and fast food joints. But as your rating increases more varied units gradually become available."

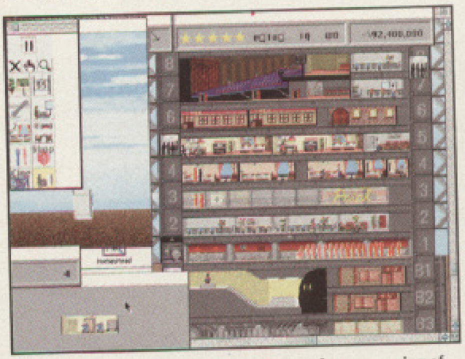
So far, so Sim City. But there's one aspect of Sim Tower that makes it very different to Maxis' previous Sims — people. "The aim with Sim Tower was to simulate not just the skyscraper itself," explains Mike, "but also the lives of the people who live inside it and how the different aspects of tall buildings affect them. So the underlying model in Sim Tower is of the people themselves and not necessarily the tower, although that is integral to the model.

"Sim Tower allows you to actually go inside a building and watch people. None of our other sim games allow you to actually look at people, so this is our first game in which we model human behaviour. In other words, you not only create the environment but also watch its effect on people. So for Sim City 2000 players this is like another level of 'zoom'.

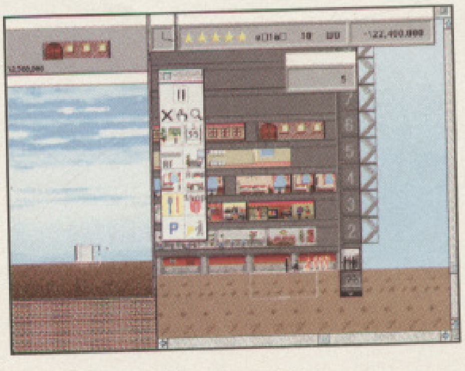
"You can select any person in the tower and find out their name, where they live and what their destination is. You can also rename them and say 'This is going to be me' or 'This is going to be Ed' [hey, thanks Mike — Dave the 'Ed']. You can then follow a guy's progress through the tower and find out his daily habits, which is useful for finding out where some of the tower's sticking points are.

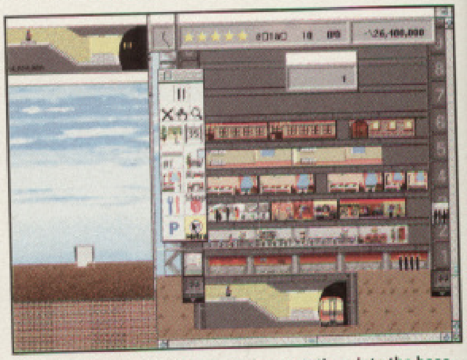
"Maybe he leaves the tower to go to work, which means you haven't provided enough office space. Or maybe he only comes in to the tower during the day to work, which means you need more residential areas.

Game	**Sim Tower**
Publisher	**Maxis**
Developer	**Open Book Ltd**
Work *started*	**October 1992**
Due for *completion*	**November 1994**

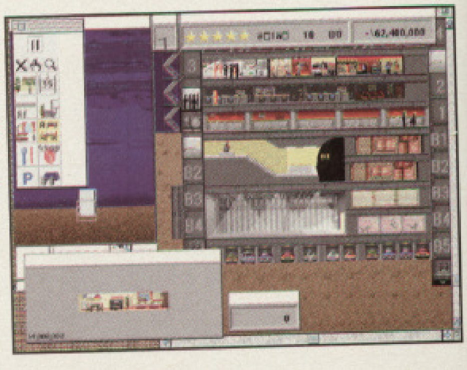


(Above) Your Tower residents settle down for a screening of Jurassic Park 2 in the cinema.





Sim Tower allows you to build subway stations into the basement of your Tower (above) and garages too (below).



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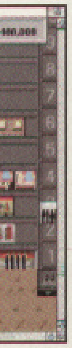

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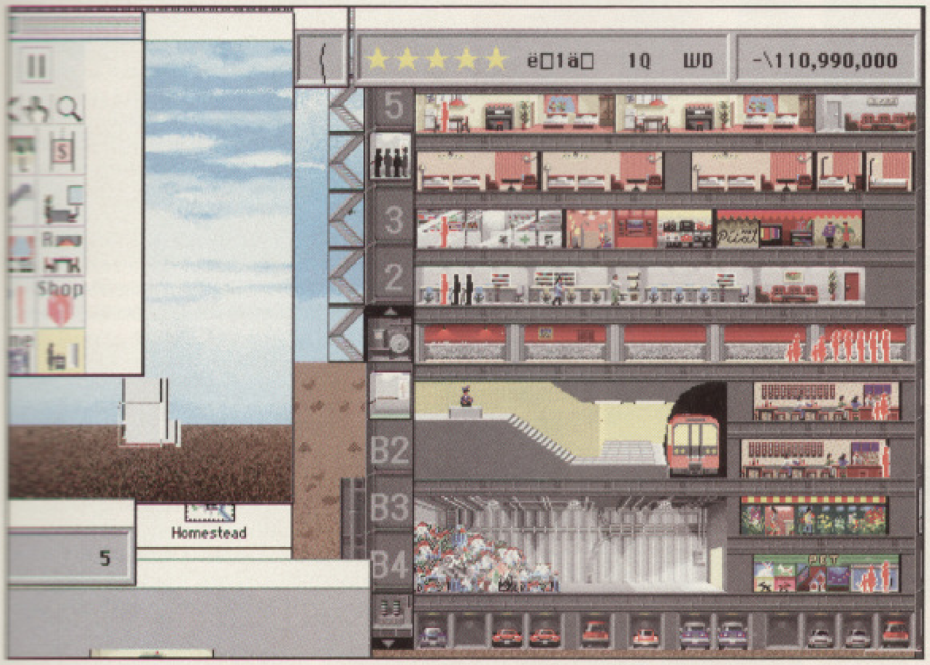
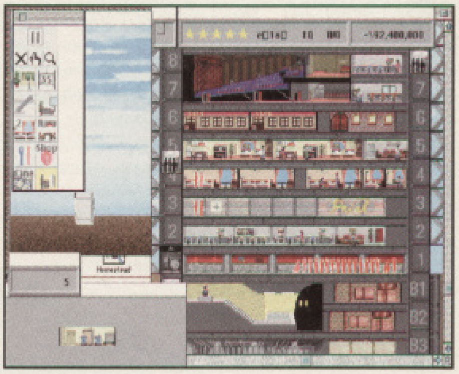


(Left) Don't worry about the weird text in the menu bars and the information windows — it's just garbage and will, of course, be changed to something more understandable in the final game. Hey, this is a work-in-progress report, after all! (Below) See that queue of red people — they're waiting for a lift, it's taking *bloody* ages and they're getting stressed out, hence their vivid colouring.



You can even check his stress level — if he's under a lot of stress, it probably means he's having trouble getting around."

Indeed, making sure that the tower's residents can move freely around the tower is one of your key objectives. "But whereas in Sim City the transportation is based almost entirely on roads," points out Mike, "in Sim Tower it's based on elevators. You have to provide an adequate number with adequate capacity and with adequate pathways so that people can get from one part of the building to the other or leave the tower easily."

> "None of our other sim games allows you to actually look at people, so this is our first game in which we model human behaviour."
>
> Mike Perry,
> Sim Tower's Producer.

Of course, once your tower's up, you've then got to keep it running. "Maintenance is a real key issue in Sim Tower," says Mike. "You have to place down maintenance zones once your tower gets to a certain size, or else you'll start to get roaches in the hotel rooms and so forth. And naturally you also have to provide the staff with service elevators to get to those areas..."

And even when you've got your tower up AND running, there's always the chance that your carefully laid plans will be thrown into disarray by the random intervention of fate... "All of the Maxis games have disasters," laughs Mike, "and Sim Tower is no exception — the building can catch fire, or a VIP might visit the building and decide to give it a lower Tower Rating." And, on top of that, I've even heard a rumour that your tower may get attacked by a giant ape...

With a program as complex as Sim Tower, the big problems lie in making sure none of the game's many elements become too unstable and start dominating or destabilising the gameplay. "Finding a good balance is always the toughest thing about our games," admits Mike. "About six people spend three to four months playtesting them. It's very contingent on the initial design. If the initial design was weak, and we did a lot of development on the fly, then the playtesting process gets a *lot* longer."

Sim Tower is a potential landmark title for Maxis, as it could be the first step along the road to creating a vast 'Sim World'... "Games like Sim Tower indicate the general direction we're going in — taking small pieces of a huge environment and modelling them smaller and smaller," says Mike. "The Sim World concept basically revolves around interaction between different Sim games — we don't know exactly *how* they'll interact yet, but that's the idea. At the moment we're doing a lot of research — it's a huge task."

Indeed. In fact, the Sim World concept makes my brain hurt just to think about it. Still, if anyone can do it — Maxis can.

Doing It *The Wright Way...*

Sim Tower was developed independently of Maxis by Open Book Ltd, a software developer based in Japan. Work had been in process for over a year before Will Wright, the creator of Sim City, brought the game to the attention of Maxis just before Christmas last year.

"The founder of Open Book is a guy named Yoot Saito," explains Mike, "and he's been a close friend of Will Wright's for the past two or three years; they have very similar interests in simulations and how models work.

"So when Yoot started work designing and developing the Sim Tower game he was in contact with Will Wright quite a bit, and the two of them bounced ideas back and forth off each other. And it's because of Will Wright's input that the game came to be such a close fit with other Maxis products."

For all Sim Tower's complexity, two years seems like a long development period... "Open Book basically went through a process which we sometimes go through with our new sims," explains Mike, "which is they design the game as they go. They came up with the basic foundations of the game and then they started playing with it. So they'd say 'It'd be really neat if we put this in' or 'This bit is useless, let's take it out.'"

So is this the patented 'Maxis Way' of creating great games?

"Well, it's not the Maxis Way, but it's the Will Wright Way!," laughs Mike. "Ideally we try to design as much as we can in advance."

preview

Resistance

Works fine on a Pentium, does it? Ah. Dean Evans nips out to negotiate with his bank manager in anticipation of Origin's SVGA space opera, Wing Commander 3.

GAME	WING COMMANDER 3
PUBLISHER	ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER	ORIGIN SYSTEMS
WORK *STARTED*	OCTOBER 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	NOVEMBER 1994

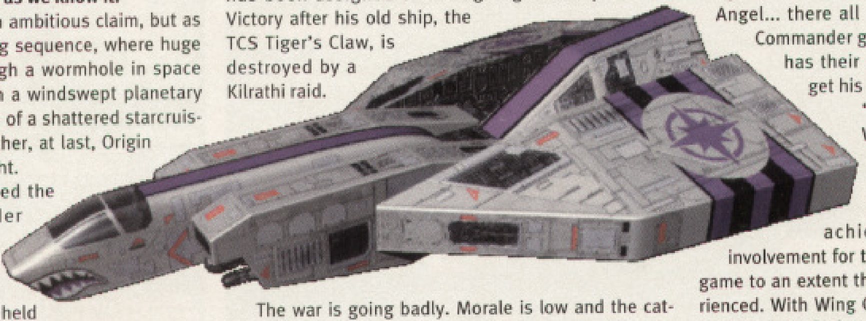
With a script penned by veteran screenwriters Frank De Palma and Terry Borst, film stars like Mark Hamill and John Rhys Davis, Super VGA flight sequences, Silicon Graphics-rendered backdrops, an orchestrated stereo soundtrack and production costs that rival a small movie, Origin's forthcoming Wing Commander 3: Heart Of The Tiger could possibly change the face of CD gaming as we know it.

Now, I know that this is an ambitious claim, but as you watch the Wing 3 opening sequence, where huge Kilrathi spaceships rip through a wormhole in space and digitised actors stand on a windswept planetary surface staring at the remains of a shattered starcruiser, you begin to wonder whether, at last, Origin have got things absolutely right.

"In the past when I created the first two Wing Commander games, I tried to be as cinematic as possible," explains Chris Roberts, Wing 3's director, "but the technology held me back. We couldn't have live action characters or footage, so what we had was basically similar to animated cartoons. But with CD-ROM, I can shoot live actors and play them back."

The original Wing Commander game linked frantic space combat sequences with a semi-interactive storyline and cartoon-style animations. And while Wing Commander 3 looks to offer exactly the same, it boasts all the glittering programming advances that 1994 has to offer — and probably a few new ones that I don't know about as well.

Set in the year 2654, Wing 3 follows the adventures of Colonel Christopher Blair, a veteran Terran pilot who has been assigned to the ageing starship TCS Victory after his old ship, the TCS Tiger's Claw, is destroyed by a Kilrathi raid.



The war is going badly. Morale is low and the cat-like Kilrathi have all but crushed the human resistance. Mankind's only hope lies in a prototype planet-smashing weapon, the Behemoth, but before it can be used a traitor within the Federation ranks hands the plans for it over to the enemy.

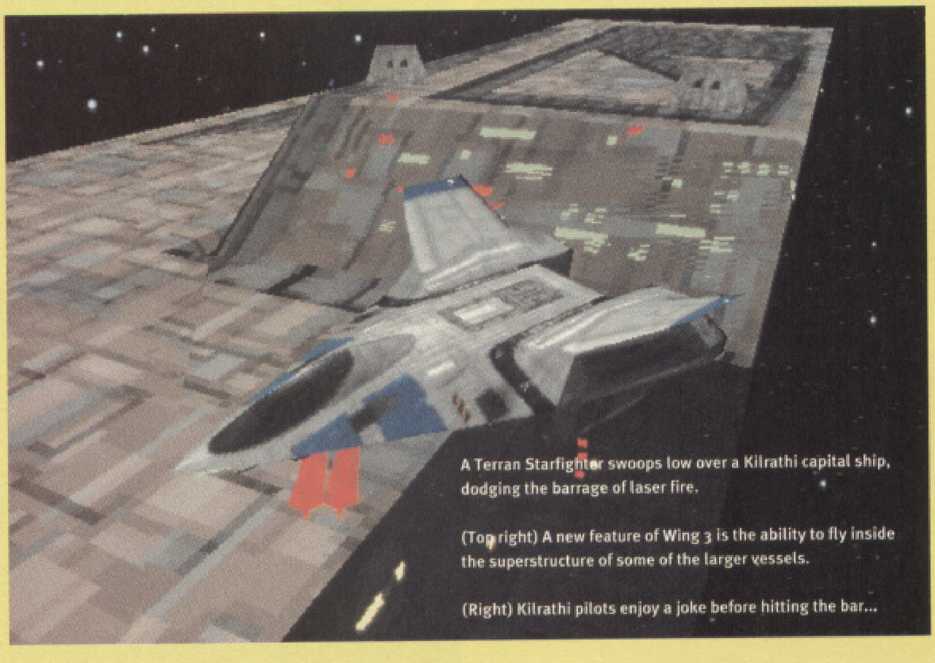
You play Blair — acted on-screen by Mark Hamill — and your job is to lead your fighter squadron against the Kilrathi, dogfighting new starships, rescuing POWs, skimming above carriers and finally flying a suicidal mission over the Kilrathi homeworld to avenge the death of a friend.

Like Wings 1 and 2, Wing Commander 3 alternates between scenes with other characters and 40 or so 3D combat missions in a variety of advanced starfighters. In fact, Wing Commander veterans should find the whole experience very familiar. But, while success in the flight bits is still vital to continue your progress, in Wing 3 it's equally important that you choose your 'interactive' choices wisely.

Every decision you make on the TCS Victory affects the morale of your shipmates around you, not only changing the plot but altering the performance of your wingmen in the subsequent missions. Maniac, Paladin, Angel... there all here and, like the original Wing Commander games, each wing person in Wing 3 has their own unique style. Maniac didn't get his name by chance, you know.

"The new technology available for Wing Commander 3," says Roberts, "allows us to take the next step in combining linear and interactive technologies to achieve a heightened emotional involvement for the players. It draws them into the game to an extent that they have not previously experienced. With Wing Commander 3 the player becomes the hero. You feel responsibility for what happens."

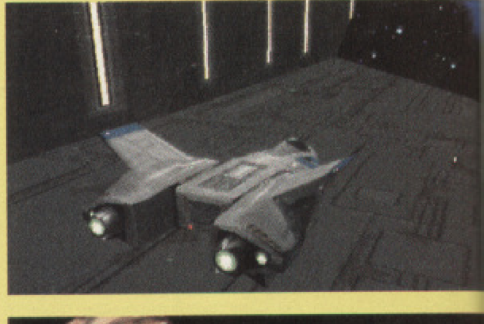
In fact, with the mix of two hours of live-action video footage, computer-generated landscapes, 3D-polygon combat sequences and cinematic production values (the game has cost upwards of $4 million to



A Terran Starfighter swoops low over a Kilrathi capital ship, dodging the barrage of laser fire.

(Top right) A new feature of Wing 3 is the ability to fly inside the superstructure of some of the larger vessels.

(Right) Kilrathi pilots enjoy a joke before hitting the bar...



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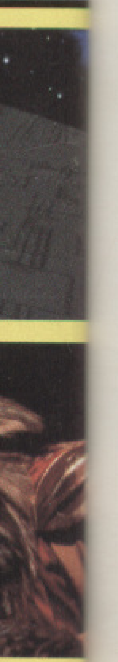
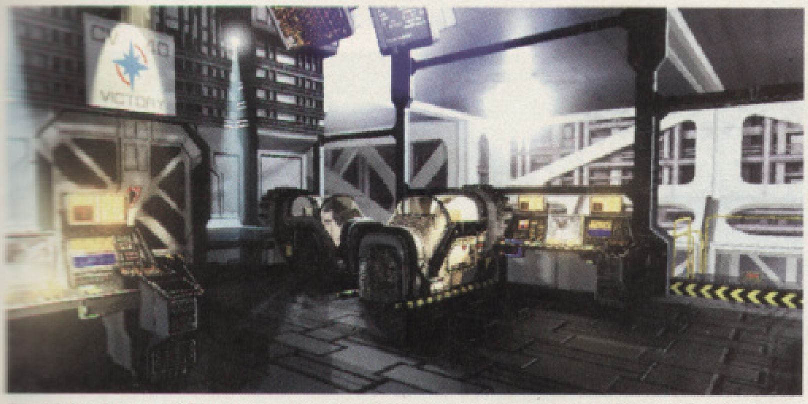
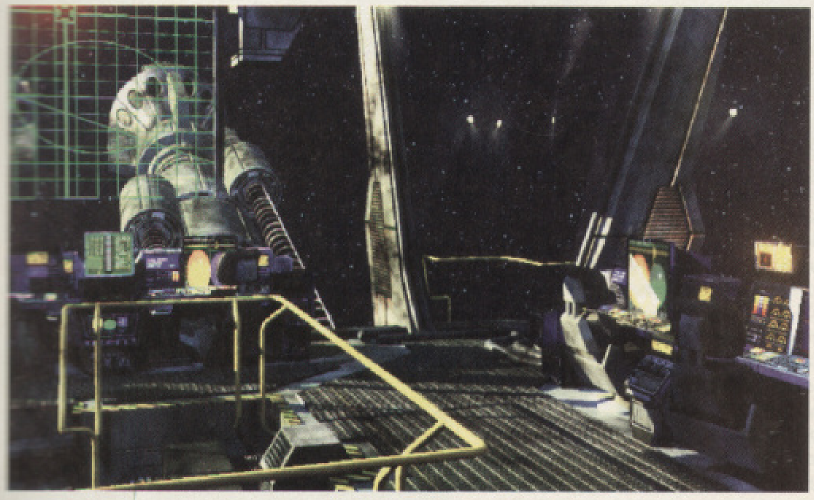




(Above) The Wing 3 artists have got a Silicon Graphics workstation and — boy! — are they going to use it.
(Below) The Gunnery deck aboard the TCS Victory is just one of the many locations you can visit in the game.



Meet *The Stars!*

After his star performance as the New Orleans cop Mosely in Sierra's moody graphic adventure, Gabriel Knight, Mark Hamill returns to deepest space to play the hot-shot space pilot, Christopher Blair. What does he think of Wing Commander 3?

"I've always been fascinated by puzzles and games of all kinds," enthuses Hamill. "What I'm trying to provide in the variations of each scene are the pieces of the puzzle that are needed to complete the story.

"There are so many eventualities in the script that making this is a whole new ball game. I have a feeling that I may look back in 50 years and say 'Hey, I was in at the beginning of this phenomenon', just like actors at the end of the silent film era might have felt when they began doing talking pictures."

Co-star John Rhys-Davis (who played Sallah in the Indiana Jones movies) plays the veteran pilot Paladin, and he is just as enthusiastic about his role in the game. "I believe that CD-ROM is indeed a trailblazing medium. My own interests have always been in science fiction and technology, both of which are in abundant supply with Wing Commander III. It's fun and entertaining and, I think, points the way towards the future of mass entertainment."

Hey, is it just me or do you get the feeling that this maybe the start of something really big?

make), Wing 3 is probably the only game I've seen this year that looks like a true 'interactive' movie.

Just the cast list alone is enough to make any PC gamer sit up and take notice. While obviously the interactive movie sceptics, and I include myself amongst their number, will put forward the same, tried and tested arguments — namely that: (a) you can't have true interactivity with FMV footage; (b) graphics maketh not a good game; and (c) playability is everything — it will be interesting to see whether Wing 3 has benefited from modern technology or suffered from it. I hope it's more than the original Wing Commander game with SVGA graphics and chromakey filmed bits.

> *"I have a feeling that I may look back in 50 years and say 'Hey, I was in at the beginning of this phenomenon', just like actors at the end of the silent film era might have felt when they began doing talking pictures."*
>
> Mark Hamill,
> Star of Wing Commander 3.

From what I've seen the new Origin 3D graphics engine allows crisp, texture-mapped SVGA graphics with relatively little loss of speed, and the player has a fair degree of control over ship selection, weapon selection and character dialogue. As you can see for yourself, the SVGA 3D sequences look fabulously impressive and the ships now have full 3D shields and are even able to fly into the superstructures of the larger cruisers.

Worryingly, the label on the box will say "For optimal SVGA (640 x 480 x 256) performance — Pentium recommended." But Origin assure me that the SVGA option (available only in the flight sequences) and the VGA mode look terrific. Obviously, if you've got a nuclear-powered PC with go-faster stripes, Wing 3 will run perfectly, but even though Origin once again is pushing the technological envelope, WC3 apparently runs beautifully on a 'normal' 486. So don't worry.

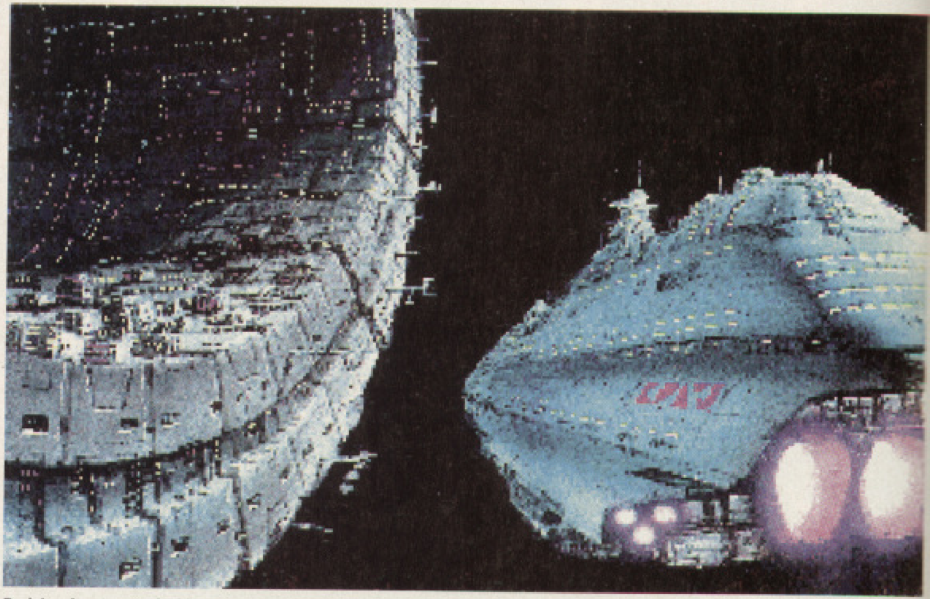
It has to be said that Wing 3 looks like it's the closest you're going to get to taking part in a sweeping space opera. Forget Battlestar Galactica, skip Star Wars — if Origin delivers everything it promises, Wing 3 looks set to be the start of the next generation of PC CD games.

If The 7th Guest was the excuse people needed to take the plunge and buy a brand new CD-ROM drive, then you know that 90MHz Pentium PC you wish you had, well, now might be a good time to start saving.

Welcome to

Graphic adventures are usually perceived as sedate, slow-paced entertainments. But not so Core Design's Universe, a white-knuckle ride of a game boasting — heaven forfend — *arcade sequences*! David Upchurch looks on amazed...

GAME	UNIVERSE
PUBLISHER	CORE DESIGN
DEVELOPER	IN-HOUSE & EAST POINT
WORK *STARTED*	DECEMBER 1992
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	OCTOBER 1994



Boris's adventures take him to many exotic places, including this 2001-style spacestation. Rolf Mohr's style of artwork varies depending on the location — here it's hard-edged and mechanical, while elsewhere it's softer and more ethereal.

While people in the good ol' US of A have been playing games on their PCs for *years*, it's only relatively recently that UK gamesplayers — and UK software companies — have woken up to the fact that the PC can do much more than just run spreadsheets and word-processing packages. Unfortunately, however, this has left our games-developing community a little *retarded* when it comes to game styles that are predominantly exclusive only to the PC.

Like graphic adventures, for example. You'll never see one on a console — well, you might, but given that even a 2Mb cart costs around ú50, you can work out for yourself that a typical adventure weighing in it around 20Mbs would be prohibitively expensive.

And yes, you can play graphic adventures on the Amiga, but because of its lack of a hard drive it's not really to be advised unless you enjoy spending more of your leisure time swapping low-density floppy disks rather than playing a game.

With their years of experience, American companies like LucasArts and Sierra have got the creation of top graphic adventures down to a fine art, and it's only recently that British developers have come up to speed.

Which is all very good news for the native graphic adventuring fan. I mean let's face it, as slick and as well-designed as the US big boys' games are, they're still very... well, *American,* aren't they? For example, some of the jokes and references in Day Of The Tentacle, excellent game though it is, left me totally non-plussed.

Thankfully, UK-created titles like AdventureSoft's Simon The Sorceror and Revolution's Beneath A Steel Sky all have a refreshingly British sense of humour running through them and, technically, prove that whatever they can do, we can do, if not exactly *better,* then certainly equally as well.

And soon there will be another name to add to that illustrious roster — Universe, from Derby-based software house Core Design. The game centres around the adventures of Boris Verne (a fateful surname if ever there was one!) who is whisked away to an alien dimension by one of the bizarre inventions created by his slightly eccentric uncle. Suffice it to say, he has to survive many perils before he gets home again.

The game was developed from an idea by Rolf Mohr, one of Core Design's in-house graphic artists, which he originally intended to use as the basis for a movie. But for various reasons (which you can read about in the "Let's make a movie..." panel) the film never happened, and Hollywood's loss is the PC gamesplayer's gain.

> "We like the idea of the player having to solve all the problems logically, rather than just 'USE'-ing everything on everything else."
>
> **Rolf Mohr,**
> Universe co-creator (!)

On paper, Universe sounds like a traditional graphic adventure, with the player guiding Boris around the colourful landscapes via a point-'n'-click interface, chatting to people and solving puzzles as he goes.

But there are several features that make Universe very different. For one thing, the quality of the graphics is exceptional, with the backgrounds — handpainted by Rolf, incidentally, and then scanned into the PC — being particularly worthy of note, alternating between a hard-edged look for the high-tech locations and a more ethereal style for the rest.

In addition, the sprite of the hero Boris is rotoscoped for a greater degree of realism. "The look of the main character Boris was inspired by Flashback [the arcade-adventure platform game from Delphine]," says Rolf. "All his main animation frames, like walking, running, picking up, were rotoscoped, just to get the 'feel' of him right."

To achieve this, Rolf was videoed performing various actions, and the animation frames were then 'traced' from the video. It's a time consuming process, which is why Boris's sprite is the only one to receive this treatment — the rest of the game's sprites were animated by hand.

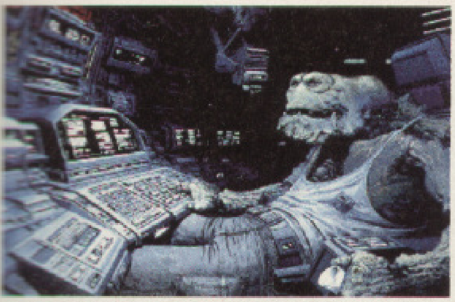
Let's make a movie...

"Universe originally started life as an idea for a film," says Rolf. "I always remember the early production designs for Dune, when it was going to be directed by Alexander Joderowsky [back in the mid-70s, film fans — Dave]. It looked really exciting but a lot of the ideas got dropped, and eventually the team working on it broke up.

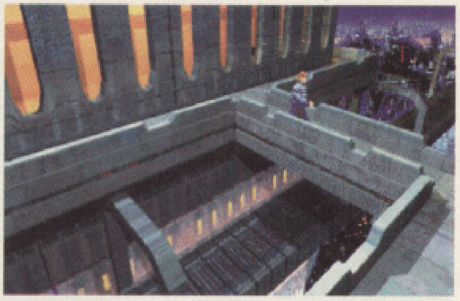
"When Dune eventually did come out [in the mid-80s, with David Lynch in the director's chair — Dave again], I thought it was really disappointing. But I always wanted to see an epic film containing big planets, spectacular vistas and lots of colour, and my idea had a lot of stuff like that in it.

"Anyway, I sent it off to some film producers along with a few illustrations, but nothing ever came of it. So I then decided to customise it into the storyline for a game. It had to be cut down quite heavily, and it now bears little resemblance to my original idea, which had vast armies marching across planets and things like that, things that would've worked great in a film, but not in a computer game. Who knows? Maybe in the future..."

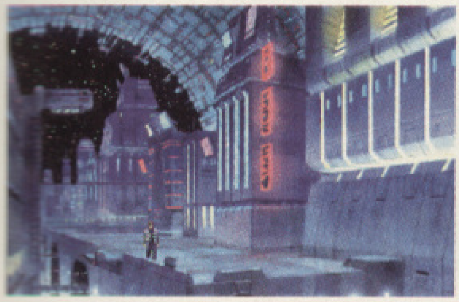
o*my* world...



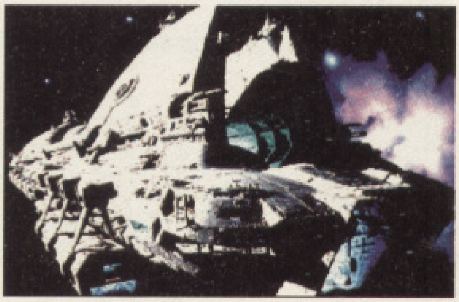
Isn't it good to know that aliens can be just as slobby and unkempt as humans?



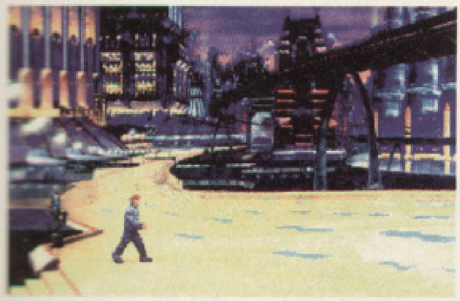
"It's a long way down to the ground..." — If you suffer from vertigo, Universe may not be your cup of tea.



As in most modern adventures, the Boris sprite is fully scaled, getting smaller in the distance and bigger in the foreground



"That's no moon..." Some of the locations and spaceship designs in Universe are truly awe-inspiring.



Hello? Is anybody there? Most locations are populated by loads of people to talk to — but not this one, sadly.

Another unusual aspect of Universe is the vast number of 'action' icons made available to the player. Most graphic adventure designers try to limit the number of icons to only six or so at most. Universe, on the other hand, has *14*, covering such esoteric actions as 'Wear', 'Throw' and even 'Insert'! "We decided on this style of interface right from the outset," explains Rolf. "We like the idea of the player having to solve all the problems logically, rather than just 'USE'-ing everything on everything else."

Universe's game structure is very tight, with the game split up into compact stages consisting of just a handful of locations. Only by solving all the puzzles in each stage can the player continue. "In some games you can see the whole map within the first few hours of play," says Rolf, "so all you've got left is lots of wandering around as you solve the puzzles. I prefer to have each bit of the game revealed slowly, so that you've always got something new to see and look forward to."

One of the benefits of this game structure is that allows Rolf and the team to structuring engineer 'mini-climaxes' at key points throughout the game, in which you're driven to act by the circumstances around you. "We wanted to get some tension into the proceedings," says Rolf, "so that sometimes you'd actually feel under some pressure. We didn't want the player just wandering around some big map."

An example of one of the 'mini-climaxes' occurs fairly early on in the game when, after a modicum of puzzle solving, you manage to bluff your way into the home of the lovely Silphinaa. However, as you're talking, Imperial Security droids arrive and start to cut their way through the front door. You have only a few minutes to make good your escape or be killed.

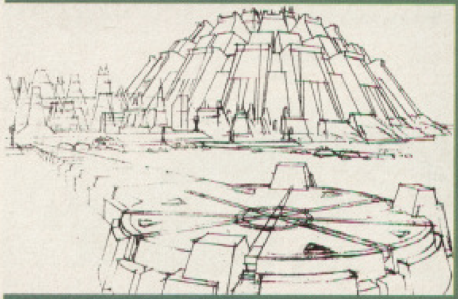
But nice as all this is, it's nothing compared to my final revelation about Universe which will make adventurers everywhere sit up and start screaming. Hold onto your potatoes, boys — Universe has got arcade sequences in it. It's true — every so often, Boris encounters a situation that can only be solved by some good old-fashioned hand/eye coordination, such as docking his spacecraft with a vast mothership and chasing hoverbikers down a 3D alleyway. Isn't there a risk that such 'light-hearted' elements may seriously *alienate* adventure purists?

"We were very aware of that," admits Rolf. "We had a *lot* of discussions and arguments about whether to put them in or not. To be honest, they're very easy and they're not really *that* arcade-y — basically they're just there to enhance the flow of the game and to add a bit of variety."

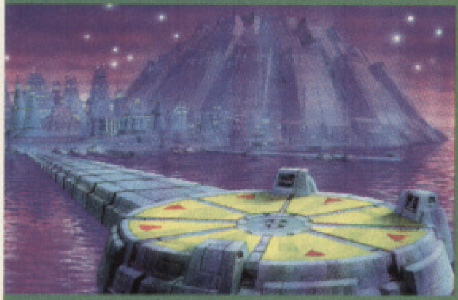
Fair enough, but I can imagine a lot of people reading this and shaking their heads in dismay. I haven't seen these arcade bits myself yet, so I can't comment on how they affect the game. I guess we'll all have to wait and see how they turn out when the final game appears next month. Should be interesting, if nothing else...

From the page to the screen

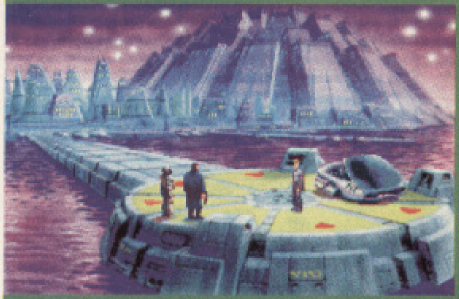
So how were the stunning backdrops for Boris Verne's adventures created? Glad you asked, because I'm about to tell you...



First Rolf Mohr draws a black-and-white preliminary sketch of the location.



Once he's happy with how it looks, it's painted and then scanned in to a PC.



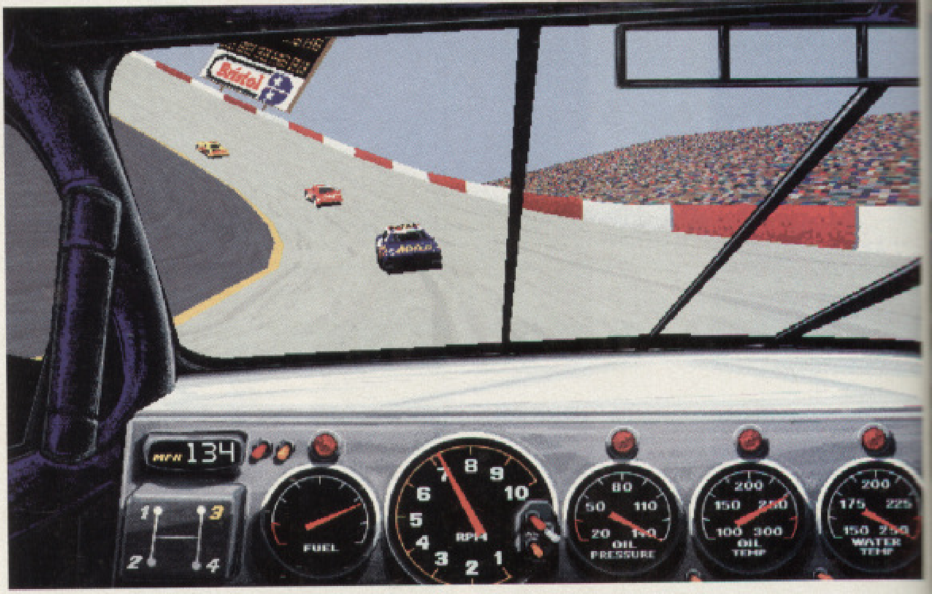
After a bit of retouching on computer, the graphic is at last incorporated into the game. Simply *marvellous*, darling!

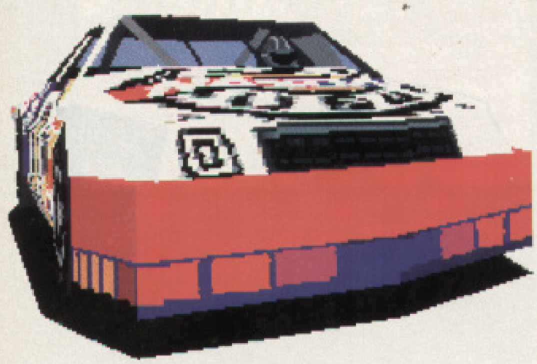
preview

Strap yourself in and prepare for the ride of your life as David Upchurch takes you for a spin in the latest racing sim from Papyrus Software.

Days of

GAME	NASCAR RACING
PUBLISHER	VIRGIN INT ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER	PAPYRUS SOFTWARE
WORK *STARTED*	DECEMBER 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	NOVEMBER 1994





To my mind, racing sims don't get any better than IndyCar Racing from Papyrus. Its blend of detailed realism, super-fast 3D action and copious amounts of spills and thrills make it THE racing sim on PC.

But time marches on, and IndyCar Racing now looks set to be eclipsed by a new sim, offering more realism, even faster 3D and so much excitement your head will probably explode. That game is NASCAR Racing and — hoorah! — it's also from Papyrus.

The game is based around stock car racing (NASCAR stands for North American Stock Car Auto Racing, you see), and allows you to race your battered old heap around a variety of authentic NASCAR circuits against authentic NASCAR drivers. It's fast, violent stuff, with cars smashing into each other at speeds of over 200mph — if you've seen the Tom Cruise movie Days Of Thunder, you'll know roughly what to expect.

"NASCAR Racing is a very different driving experience to IndyCar," claims Adam Levesque, NASCAR Racing's Producer/Designer. "The car feels and reacts much differently. From my point of view, going close to 250mph around Michigan in IndyCar is exciting, but there's something even more exciting — and even a little scary — about driving a stock car around Talladega at speeds over 200mph. You want to say "Oh #$&@, this car shouldn't be going this fast!" It feels like it's on the ragged edge and one false move could send you into the wall — which is the way it actually is.

"You don't get the same feeling in IndyCar because the car was really made to go that fast. I mean, imagine going close to 200mph in your car — that's the kind of feeling you get driving a stock car at high speeds. We hope we've captured that thrill and excitement in NASCAR Racing."

Captured it? From what I've seen they're practically holding it hostage! IndyCar's success is undoubtedly due in part to that game's superb realism, and NASCAR is equally rigorous. According to Adam: "Papyrus is known for the realism of its simulations; the variety of options you can change and the realistic feel of the car on the track. That is something we are proud of and will continue to focus on.

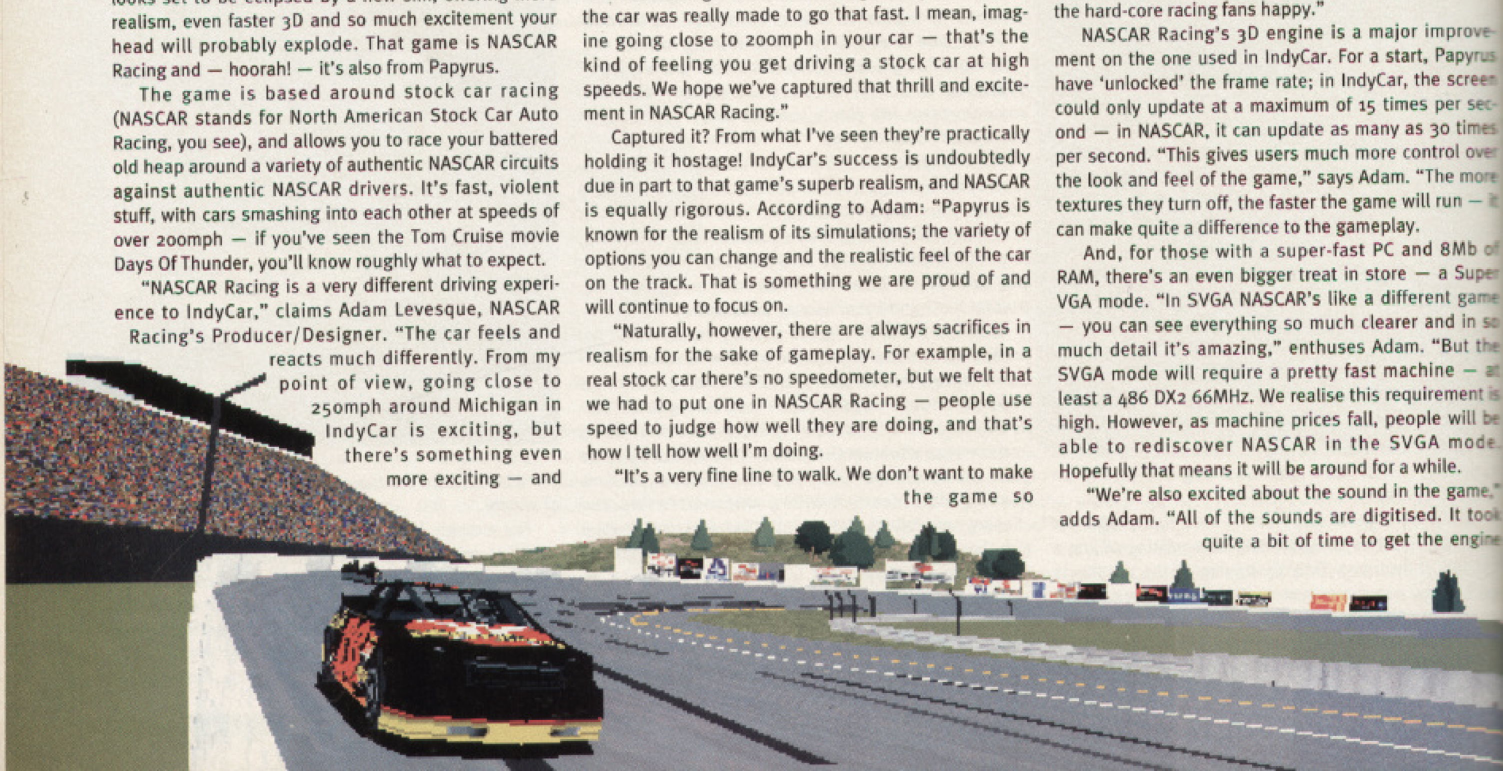
"Naturally, however, there are always sacrifices in realism for the sake of gameplay. For example, in a real stock car there's no speedometer, but we felt that we had to put one in NASCAR Racing — people use speed to judge how well they are doing, and that's how I tell how well I'm doing.

"It's a very fine line to walk. We don't want to make the game so realistic no-one can play it. On the other hand, we don't want to make a game so easy that people will lose interest in it quickly. We tend to lean towards the realism side, but we are improving the help features, including auto-braking and steering assistance, so the learning curve will be a lot easier for novice drivers. It's important for us to expand our market but also keep the hard-core racing fans happy."

NASCAR Racing's 3D engine is a major improvement on the one used in IndyCar. For a start, Papyrus have 'unlocked' the frame rate; in IndyCar, the screen could only update at a maximum of 15 times per second — in NASCAR, it can update as many as 30 times per second. "This gives users much more control over the look and feel of the game," says Adam. "The more textures they turn off, the faster the game will run — it can make quite a difference to the gameplay.

And, for those with a super-fast PC and 8Mb of RAM, there's an even bigger treat in store — a Super VGA mode. "In SVGA NASCAR's like a different game — you can see everything so much clearer and in so much detail it's amazing," enthuses Adam. "But the SVGA mode will require a pretty fast machine — at least a 486 DX2 66MHz. We realise this requirement is high. However, as machine prices fall, people will be able to rediscover NASCAR in the SVGA mode. Hopefully that means it will be around for a while.

"We're also excited about the sound in the game," adds Adam. "All of the sounds are digitised. It took quite a bit of time to get the engine



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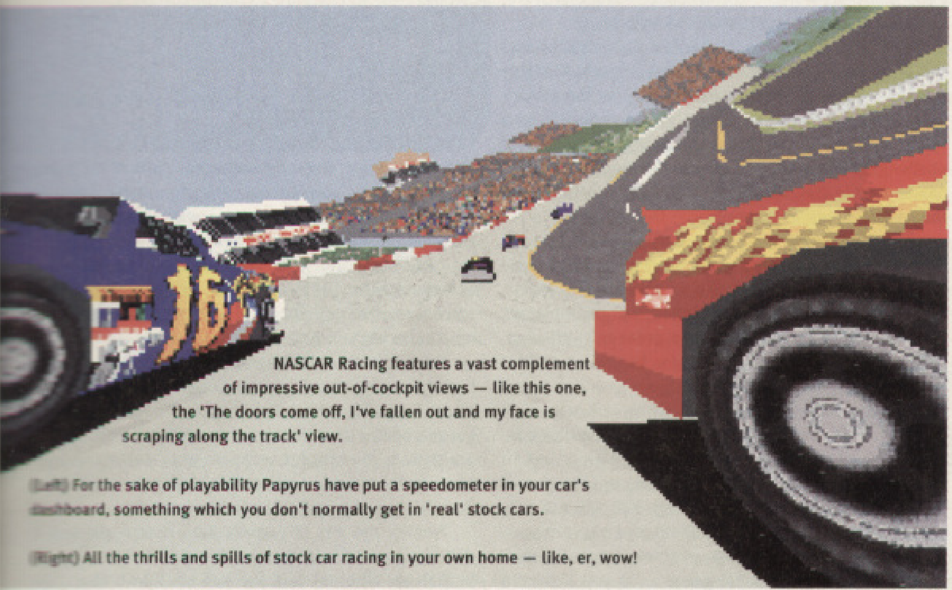
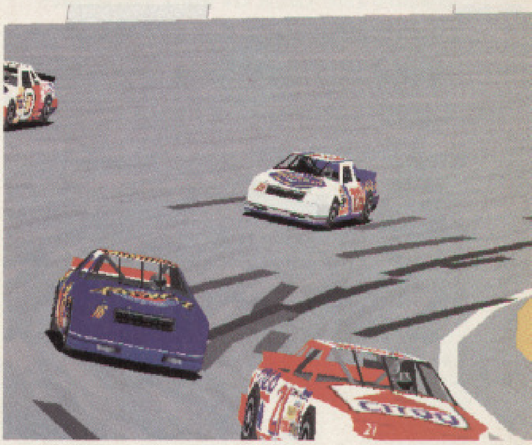


NASCAR Racing features a vast complement of impressive out-of-cockpit views — like this one, the 'The doors come off, I've fallen out and my face is scraping along the track' view.

(Left) For the sake of playability Papyrus have put a speedometer in your car's dashboard, something which you don't normally get in 'real' stock cars.

(Right) All the thrills and spills of stock car racing in your own home — like, er, wow!



sounding good, but we are very happy with the result. Also, the sound is going to be in stereo for those who have the appropriate soundcard — you'll be able to tell which side a car is passing you on without even looking at the screen."

Of course, the development of NASCAR Racing hasn't all been plain sailing — but surprisingly it wasn't the 3D engine that caused the major headaches."The biggest difficulty was getting the artificial intelligence right," claims Adam. "It's funny, because I wasn't worried at all about the physics — it's one of the areas in which Dave Kaemmer [the man responsible for the physical modelling] excels. While it's a tough thing to get right, it can be pretty straightforward.

"I think the AI, however, is a completely different problem. It is what we like to call a 'black hole': you can spend a long time programming the AI, think you have it working correctly and then — BAM! — you find it doing something very strange. Then you have to go in, fix it, and then rebuild it again. It can be a long frustrating process.

"Surprisingly the hardest part of programming the AI is not the different opponent strategies, but just making sure the cars are driving around in a realistic fashion and not ramming into each other or the player. We have made sure that the opponent cars will be affected by the same kind of physical forces as the player car — this is a big step in solving this problem, and I hope people will be pleased by the results."

> "...There's something even more exciting — and even a little scary — about driving a stock car around Talladega at speeds over 200mph. You want to say 'Oh #$&@, this car shouldn't be going this fast!'"
>
> Adam Levesque, NASCAR Racing's Producer/Designer

While NASCAR Racing may look totally amazing to you and me, it represents only a fraction of what Adam and his team originally set out to do. "At first NASCAR started out as a very ambitious project," says Adam. "But then, when we realised the project would finish sometime in the year 2005, we knew we had to cut some things! There's always that agonising point you reach in any project where you realise there isn't enough time to do all that you set out to do.

"Every project, at every company, reaches this point. The game you end up with at the end of a project is always different from the vision you had at the beginning. Things are designed, thrown out, programmed, changed and tweaked continuously throughout the project.

"There have been some things we thought would be easy which have turned out to be very difficult, and things we thought would be very difficult but which turned out to be relatively easy. It's all a learning experience. The important thing is that NASCAR Racing is a better game than IndyCar — that's what we set out to do and I think we've accomplished that."

A lot of the new features in NASCAR are a direct result of input from people who bought and played IndyCar. "We compiled a large list of all the things people wanted fixed or changed, added a few of our own, and came up with a list of features for NASCAR Racing," says Adam. "This list included things like a save game feature, replay telemetry, outside driving mode, better driving aids, plus a whole lot of other things. I think we have done a good job addressing requests from our users."

The team at Papyrus take any comments, suggestions or complaints from their audience very seriously. "While it's great to hear how much people like and enjoy IndyCar," says Adam, "it's actually better when we hear what we didn't do right, as painful as that may be. I mean, these are the people who are buying the game, so we'd better listen to them."

So what does the future hold for Papyrus? "Well, we haven't locked down our plans for our next game," says Adam. "I can say that we'll be doing more racing games. I think we've developed a very good core racing engine. Now that we have that engine, we can concentrate on the higher level issues in future products."

But aren't Papyrus getting a little... well, *tired* of racing games? "I don't know if we'll ever get tired of racing games," admits Adam. "We do want to expand into other game genres, although what those are and when that may happen is not clear at this point. What *is* clear is that our goal here at Papyrus is to make quality products, whatever they may be."

With NASCAR Racing now just a couple of months away from release, everyone at Papyrus is busier than a beaver on ProPlus. "Every project I've worked on seems to start out relatively slowly," laughs Adam, "and then it builds and builds until you get to the stage we're at now, where everyone is working like mad to make sure we hit the release date. It's a crazy business in that sense."

Crazy? Yeah, maybe — but when the end result is a game like NASCAR Racing, there definitely seems to be method in the madness.

Land Ahoy!

Where are the first-class cabins? Dean Evans grumbles about the lack of soft furnishings as he sails for the New World in Sid Meier's Colonization.

Despite rumours to the contrary, Sid Meier's forthcoming strategy game Colonization isn't going to be the much hoped for Civilization 2 at all. I've had a version sitting on my hard disk for the past two weeks and, to my mind, it looks like Civilization, plays uncannily like Civilization and, bar a few enhanced game mechanics that I'll mention in a moment, it *is* Civilzation. Rather than being a shiny new game, Colonization is a spin-off — a Civilization one-and-a-half.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with this. Civilization was a huge success, combining complex strategy with an intuitive control interface and depth of gameplay that, in my opinion, has yet to be equalled. Granted, it didn't *look* all that great but, as we say so often here at PC GAMES, graphics maketh not the game.

Colonization isn't going to win any prettiness awards either. As you can see, the visuals haven't improved much beyond those in Civ, and again, Sid Meier has opted for the top-down map viewpoint. This time around, however, the towns are drawn with a bit more detail, the icons are a touch more intricate and there are some attractive watercolour stills, but on the whole the look of the game is functional rather than chock full of graphical opulence.

Unlike Civ, in Colonization the gameworld is confined to the American continents and focuses on a single era in history from 1500 to 1800 — the discovery, exploration and colonization of the New World.

With mounting unrest in Europe, Colonization lets you take control of either the English, French, Dutch or Spanish colonists. You can choose to play the historically accurate Americas (both North and South) or a randomly-generated world with varying resources and challenges. Whatever you decide, the idea remains the same: land in the New World, establish a colony, and then expand your influence across the continent.

"When starting the game, beginners will find it easy to play because they can start on a small scale with only one colony," explains creator, Sid Meier. "Then, the game builds to a higher level once players have learned more and want a greater challenge. Therefore, Colonization is both for beginners and for history experts."

Civ veterans will feel right at home with Colonization. There are three computer-controlled nations to fight, Indian tribes to conquer and, of course, untold riches waiting to be plundered. You will not only have to juggle resources and explore your new home, but also oversee economic, military and political growth, as you strive to establish independence from the control of the mother country.

"When playing Colonization, you must consider not only economic, political and military power, but also people power," said Brian Reynolds, co-designer and lead programmer on the project. "In order to achieve independence, you must decide how you will treat the native population in the New World. Will you make friends with them, avoid them, wage war on them or trade with them? Your actions determine how the game will develop."

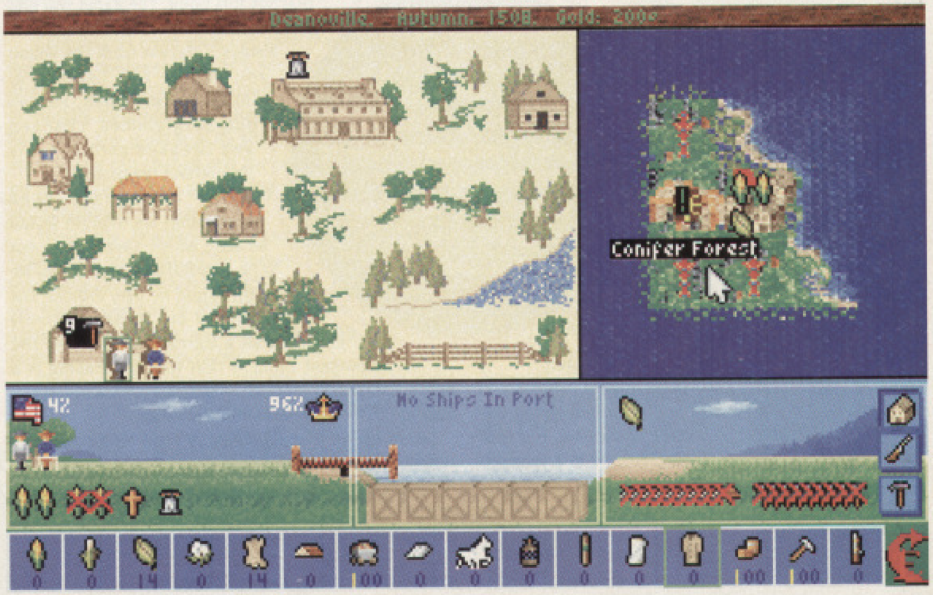
GAME	**COLONIZATION**
PUBLISHER	**MICROPROSE**
DEVELOPER	**SID MEIER**
WORK *STARTED*	**AUGUST 1993**
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	**NOVEMBER 1994**

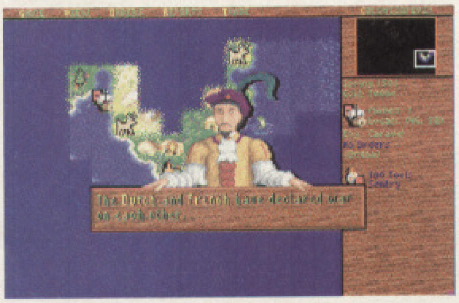
In fact, one of the most important parts of the game involves colony management. In Colonization, you can assign your colonists to pursue any of 20 different professions including farming, fur trading, weaving, mining, soldiering and so on. With training, colonists can achieve mastery of their chosen skills, which in turn increases their efficiency. Obviously, this efficiency help make each colony productive and self-sufficient.

Trade with the mother country is also very important, because not only can you ship in valuable materials and goods, the land of your birth is an important source of raw recruits, veteran soldiers and trained craftsmen. Miners, fur trappers and carpenters will need to be attracted to your colony if you want your community to be profitable and to expand.

Finally, the aim of Colonization is to explore and develop your colonies so that they become totally self-sufficient. When at last you are confident that your community can survive without the support of the mother country, you can risk everything and declare independence. This act leads to the final phase of the game which involves a huge, desperate war fought between your colonists and their former European rulers. Of course, there's no prize for second place...

Colonization looks to have the same addictive gameplay that characterised Civ, and when you finally get your hands on a copy you'll find much that's very familiar — and therefore easy to learn — plus a few new and exciting challenges. You'll love it...




The Dutch and French have declared war on each other.

preview

Armageddon

An armoured weapons platorm simulation? Hey, tanks a lot! Dean Evans battles the Red Army as he trundles around in Novalogic's long-awaited Armoured Fist.

If you've got a good memory, you might just remember that Armoured Fist, Novalogic's hyper-realistic tank warfare simulation, was originally going to be launched last year. However, when the California-based company perfected the Voxel-Spacing technology that was used to such impressive effect in Comanche: Maximum Overkill, work on AF was halted and the decision was made to incorporate the new technology.

A year later, Armoured Fist is finally ready to roll and with its new graphical facelift and military specification game mechanics, Novalogic are supremely confident that the game will be the best and most realistic tank simulation on the PC, even, the programmers dare to suggest, state-of-the-art.

Like MicroProse's ancient but superb M1 Tank Platoon, Armoured Fist not only plunges you into the middle of frantic tank battles, but also places you in command of a company of armoured and mechanised units. If you choose to play the Americans, you can take control of the advanced M1A2 Abrams Battletank and the M3 Bradley IFV or, if you want to see the war from a different perspective, AF also allows you to drive the Soviet built T-80 and the BMP Armoured Personnel Carrier.

Driving around in your 25-ton gun-with-wheels is simplicity itself. An intuitive mouse interface negates the need for joystick waggling or keyboard tapping, and all of your tank's functions can easily be controlled from the same screen. Unlike M1 Tank Platoon you don't need to switch positions to control the gunner, driver and commander.

And, as overall commander of the company, you're able to dictate and plan the battle strategy for up to four individual platoons. If you're a strategist you can fight the battles from the warm safety of the Command & Control Vehicle, or if you're fond of a bit of heart-stopping action you can get right in the thick of it with the grunts in the armour.

Of course, the most exciting feature of Armoured Fist is the Voxel-Space generated landscape. But while it suffers the same problems that plagued Comanche (i.e. the graphics tend to look a touch blocky), where you could once hover behind hills in your helicopter, in Armoured Fist you can drive over and around the terrain; hiding behind hills, skulking in river beds and even digging into strategic, tree-lined gullies.

"Translucent smoke and explosions, never before seen in a tank simulation, billow across the terrain and give the player the experience of real tank warfare," explains John Garcia, President of Novalogic. "Armoured Fist will set new standards in landscape imaging and special effects in a tank simulation."

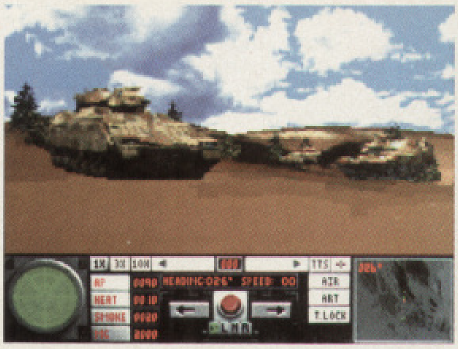
In fact, the attention-to-detail is quite superb and, apart from the realistically rendered terrain (which is much better than the landscapes that whizz below you in most of today's modern flight sims), the armour featured in the game is accurately modelled using technical specifications provided by the US Army and gleaned from the Russians after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

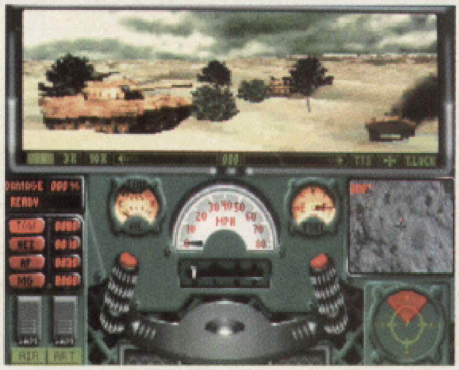
The disk version of the game includes one training scenario and four very different campaigns, each with their own realistic combat missions, while the CD will include additional missions and the almost obligatory five-minute intro sequence.

If all this wasn't enough, Armoured Fist also features a built-in mission construction set, that allows you to create new battles and tactical challenges as diverse as your imagination will allow. "The average player probably won't use the mission builder," says John Garcia, "but the weathered wargamer will see it as a dream come true."

Armoured Fist should be available by the time you read this and, as we go to press, Novalogic are putting the final touches to the artificial intelligence of support helicopters and artillery as well as tweaking the mission building section. There's only one problem with it all... If you want the ultimate tank sim you're going to need a whopping 8Mb of RAM to even run it. You have been warned.

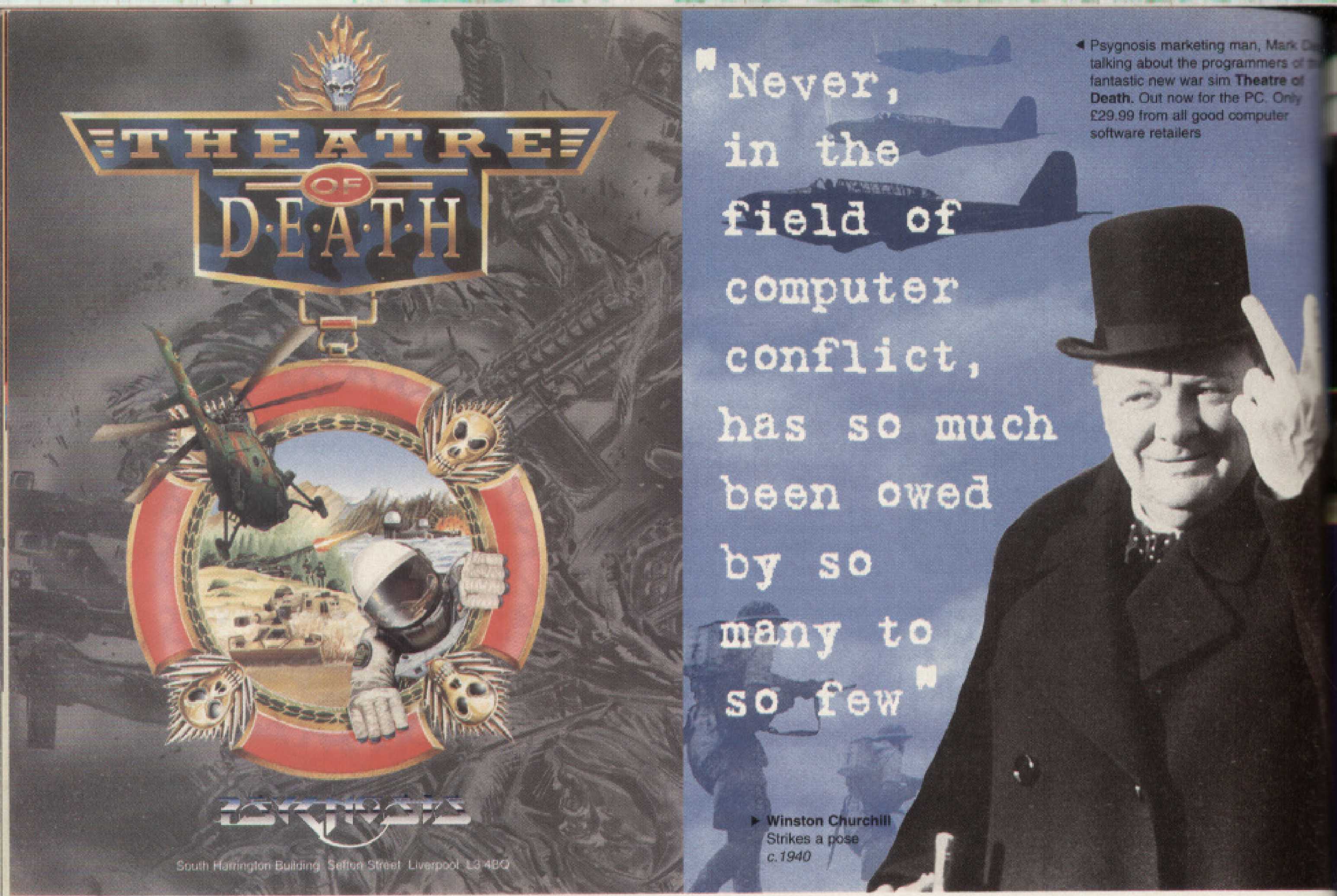
Game	Armoured Fist
Publisher	Novalogic
Developer	In-House
Work *started*	June 1992
Due for *completion*	September 1994





(Above) With revolutionary techy-bits like in-tank imaging, strategic displays, night vision optics and the ability to call in air support and artillery barrages, Armoured Fist is shaping up to be massively comprehensive indeed.

(Below and left) The beautifully rendered intro sequence shows the strength of American M1A2 tanks against the power of Russian-built Hind gunships. Doesn't it look just gorgeous...?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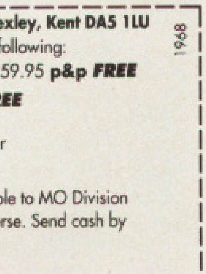
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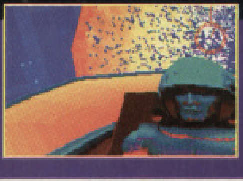
reviews

MonitorMan™

Weird. Many of the games reviewed this issue are obsessed with either space or football. Isn't that strange? Must be the heat. Or something. (Shut up - Ed.)



Reviewed On Disk

Arcade Pool	Team 17	53
Battle Bugs	Sierra	54
Dark Legions	US Gold	48
FIFA International Soccer	Electronic Arts	72
Harpoon 2	Electronic Arts	74
Heimdall 2	Core Design	68
IndyCar Racing Expansion Pack	Virgin	71
Ishar 3	Silmarils	52
Kick Off 3	Anco	53
On The Ball	Ascon	66
Overlord	Virgin	70
Planet Football	Infogrames	64
Project-X	Team 17	46
Soccer Kid	Krisalis	58
Superhero League Of Hoboken	Accolade	50
TIE Fighter	LucasArts	78
Wargames Construction Kit II: Tanks!	US Gold	71
Wing Commander Armada	Origin	56
Zool 2	Gremlin	76

Reviewed On CD

Al-Qadim	US Gold	82
Beneath A Steel Sky	Virgin	82
Inferno	Ocean	42
Litil Divil	Gremlin	82
Outpost	Sierra	60
Privateer	Origin	82
Shadow Of The Comet	Infogrames	82

The coveted PC GAMES STAR

is awarded to any game scoring 90% or over, indicating that the game in question is an essential addition to any gamesplayer's software collection.

HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO...

Everyone at PC GAMES is a complete gaming nut. That's why we know exactly what you want to see in a game review (or so we like to think).

So what do you get?

Well, you get all the info you need and no waffling — we get straight to the point. On top of that you get loads of big screenshots of the game in action, along with maps and diagrams helpfully illustrating any major gameplay features — after all a picture, as they say, speaks a thousand words.

Then we compare the big games with another of similar type in the 'It's A Bit Like...' panel. Typically this will be the best game in its genre so you'll probably be pretty familiar with it, thus giving you a handy point of reference.

The whole PC GAMES team plays every game reviewed and, although only one person's name appears on each review, the criticisms and Overall mark reflect all of our combined opinions, hopefully giving you a balanced view. Should any team member disagree violently with the rest, his comments will appear in a special box in the review.

Finally, we have the essential score panel...

All the guff you need to know about who publishes the game, who developed it, its price and when it's due to be released. You even get a contact 'phone number to call if you want more info.

Details the minimum machine specification as recommend by the software company, along with how much valuable hard disk space it takes up and what optional peripherals it'll recognise.

The game's good and bad points, which are basically a concise summary of the criticisms made in the main review.

The Overall Score. We don't see any point in ratings for playability and all that other stuff — you get one mark to sum everything up and that's it.

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33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 35Mb of hard disk space and mouse

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, Wave Blaster and Sound Canvas soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Wonderfully well-animated graphics with lots of variety.
- Excellent sound effects throughout.
- Great fun for anyone who's not a major strategy-head.

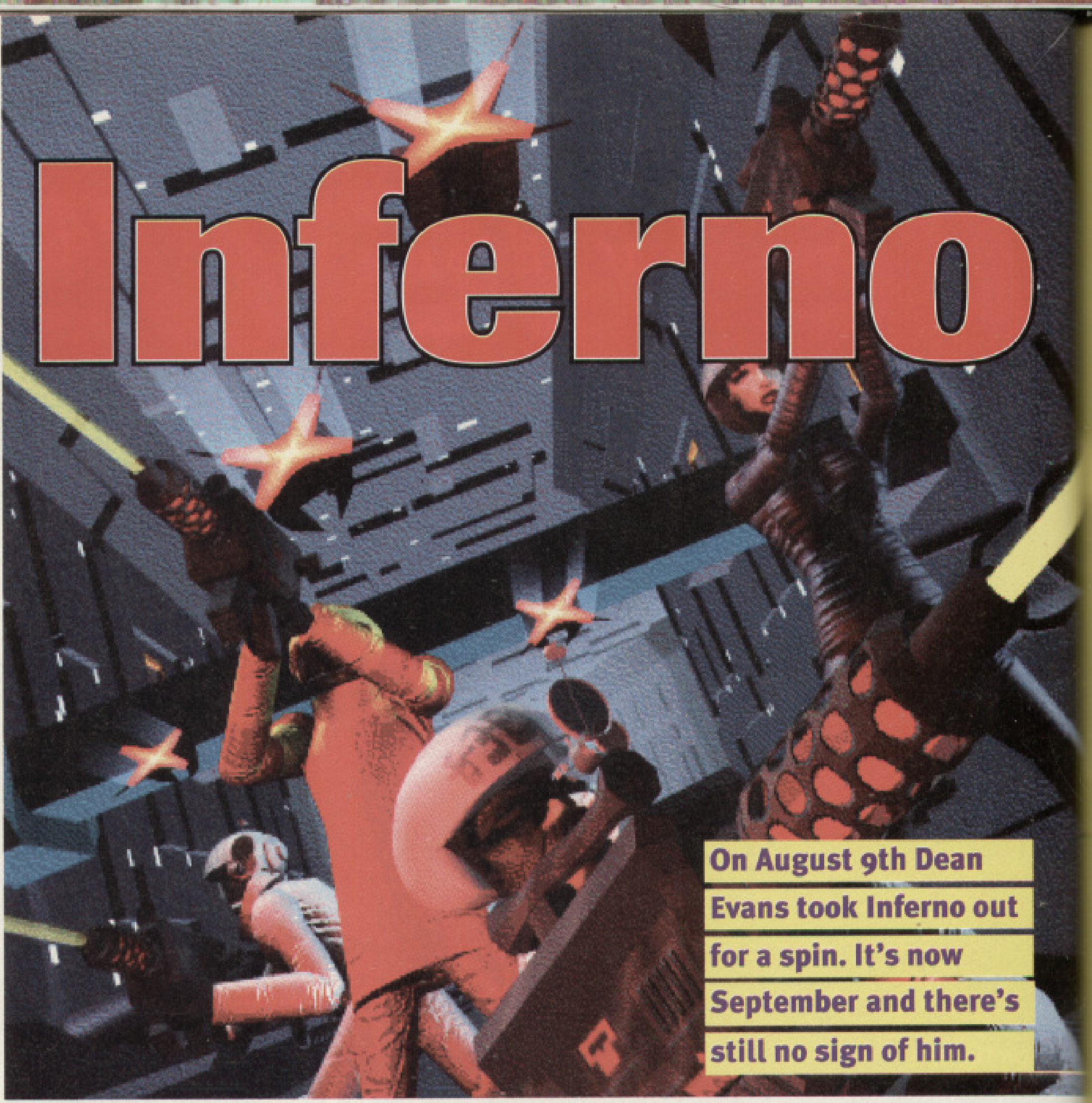
...AND THE BAD

- TIf you *are* a major strategy-head it might seem a bit low-brow.
- Two player mode is a little flawed and I can't see it being played over the phone much in this country.

Overall

85%

Inferno



On August 9th Dean Evans took Inferno out for a spin. It's now September and there's still no sign of him.

PC GAMES STAR

Mankind's greatest spacepilot strides into the Terran briefing room wearing gravity boots that a scrap metal dealer would give his right arm for. "Any news about my the results of my medical sir?" He asks. "Yes Commander," begins the Elder. "The tests revealed some rather startling information. It seems that the alien Morph Chamber radically altered you're molecular structure..."

So, at last, begins Inferno, the vast, cinematic space-combat simulator from 3D specialists, Digital Image Design. As promised, this is a space opera in the old tradition; an immense 3D polygon game with a free-form storyline that takes you on a see-saw ride of adventure across an asteroid field, seven planets, four moons and even into the very heart of starcruisers and bases.

Forget the simplistic gameplay of TIE Fighter, because with over 700 different missions to fly and evil aliens to battle (and yes, they are slightly green and bug-eyed), Inferno has all the ingredients of a true space classic — it's also the very first space combat game to feature 'virtual cockpit' technology to enhance the simulated feel of frantic, off-world combat.

Although not strictly a sequel, Inferno is the next chapter in DID's Epic saga. In the last game, mankind battled the evil Rexxon Empire while fleeing from a SuperNova that destroyed Earth's fragile solar system. Fortunately, mankind triumphed and settled in a new star system. But, things haven't stayed quiet for very long. The Rexxons are back on the scene. They're big, they're bad and they're determined to avenge their earlier defeat.

As for the immediate storyline, this is told in comic form and illustrated by renowned 2000AD artist, Sean Philips. The story tells of the hero being captured by the Rexxons and cruelly subjected to a spell in their patent Morph Chamber. Although he manages to escape, the alien morph process has irreversibly altered his molecular structure and gives him the power to endure a new teleportation process being developed by the humans. With me so far? Good.

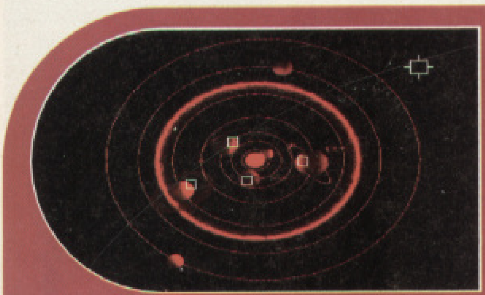
Anyway, what all this means is that as the game's musclebound hero, you can be 'beamed' out of your spaceship moments before death. Now, while this is great news for crap space pilots everywhere, unfortunately you can only survive this experimental process twice. The upshot if all this is, that like an arcade shoot 'em up, in Inferno you have three lives to play with.

But despite the arcade slant, Inferno is much more than just a pretty, mission-based bug-hunt, it offers you a variety of space-borne and planetary missions and three very different modes of gameplay.

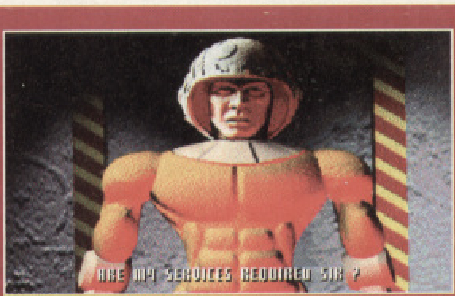
The first of these is Arcade and, as the name suggests, this is the option to choose if you want to have a quick, ten minute, plot-free blast. One level up, in the Evolutionary mode, things get a touch more complex because here you get a chance to fly a number of linked missions with the aim of achieving a specific tactical goal. Obviously, the Evolutionary option demands more commitment than the Arcade mode, but even this pales into insignificance when compared to the last option, the Director's Cut.

The Director's Cut dumps you right in the middle of the ongoing campaign and once you start here, the game and the plot unfold as a direct consequence of your actions. Every mission counts and while success could swing the war your way, failing one mission too many could condemn mankind to early extinction. This is the ultimate campaign option and it's utterly absorbing.

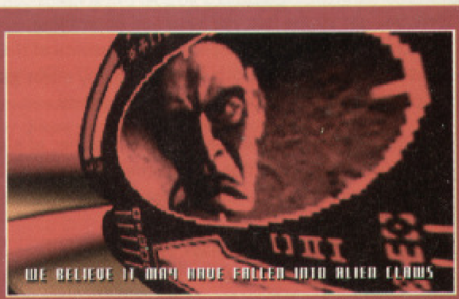
Having chosen your preferred mode



In the Director's Cut, you choose which part of the solar system you'd rather fight in. This time I've gone for Terra Nova, my home planet. Chances are this will be a tough one...



It seems things are not going well. I can't breathe very well in my stylish, body-hugging evening-wear and, worse still, it appears that the Rexxons are massing for an attack.



Terrible news. Apparently the Rexxons have attacked and seized control of the planetary shield. If their bug-ships are allowed through, you can kiss goodbye to Terra Nova.

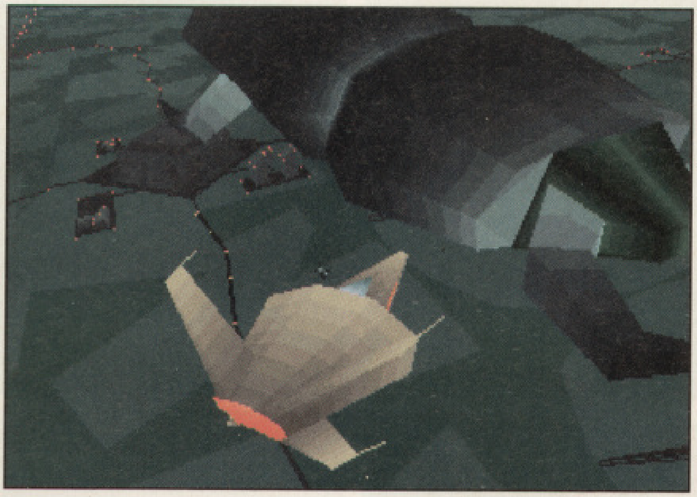
Warring Factions

Your DefCorp boss bears a striking resemblance to a big banana. Nice guy though.

With muscles, the lantern-jaw and the brash attitude, it can only be the hero — and it is.

The Rexxon chief is fat and has no legs but apparently he's considered quite a looker...

Ah, my favourite bio-clone... Kreeg is a good pilot but not blessed with much intelligence.



The smaller bug-ships can be destroyed quite easily with a few blasts from the Megadeth gun. The bigger ones, however, are a bit more tricky. You've got to get inside these babies...

of play, Inferno then invites you to sit back, relax and take in the mission briefings, which are all detailed in cartoon-like, high-resolution cutscenes complete with digitised speech.

The script seems to have been written in a boys-own, 1930's science fiction style, often verging on the corny. But ultimately it works very well and the little chats you have with your commander, create a very unique gaming atmosphere. It's all very light-hearted too; your boss looks like he's half-man, half-banana and as for you, your body is so oddly-proportioned it's a surprise the doctors haven't been called in to administer a drugs test.

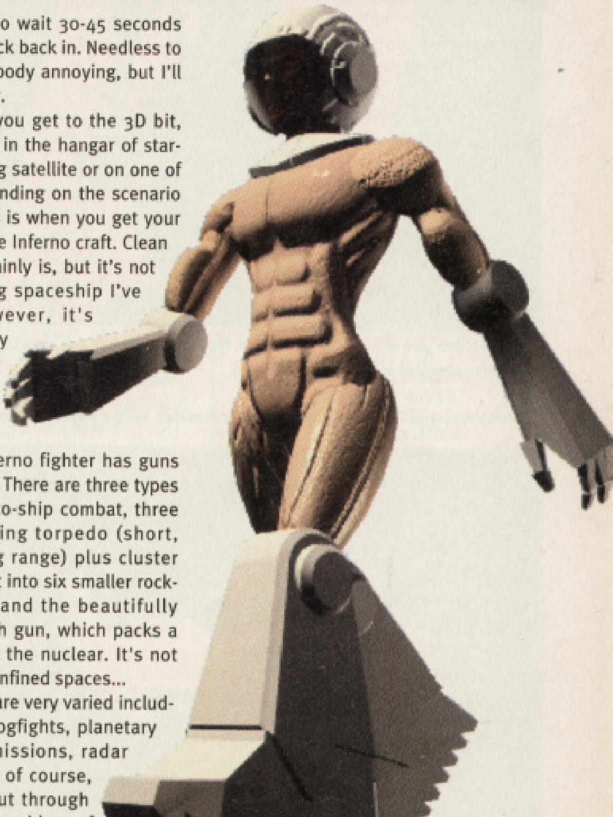
The sequences are also very cinematic, helped enormously by the switching of the camera views and the pounding stereo soundtrack thrashed out by Goth rock band, Alien Sex Fiend. I really must emphasise how brilliant the music is. It's loud, there's lots of guitars and it's the perfect accompaniment to the game. Really, it has to be heard to be believed.

Unfortunately, before you can even begin to strut your stuff in the 3D sequences, you have to endure a long wait while the world data is hauled off of the CD and dumped onto the computer. Because of the high-res scenes, Inferno isn't a seamless 3D game and every time you nip from one to the other, you have to wait 30-45 seconds for the game to kick back in. Needless to say, I find this bloody annoying, but I'll get back to it later.

When finally you get to the 3D bit, you'll either start in the hangar of starship, in an orbiting satellite or on one of the planets, depending on the scenario you're flying. This is when you get your first glimpse of the Inferno craft. Clean and sleek, it certainly is, but it's not the most exciting spaceship I've ever seen. However, it's quick, massively armoured and packed full of high-tech weaponry.

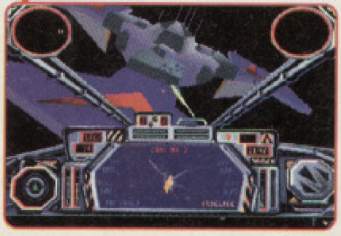
In fact the Inferno fighter has guns all over the place. There are three types of laser for ship-to-ship combat, three flavours of homing torpedo (short, medium and long range) plus cluster missiles (that split into six smaller rockets after firing) and the beautifully named Megadeath gun, which packs a punch verging on the nuclear. It's not wise to use it in confined spaces...

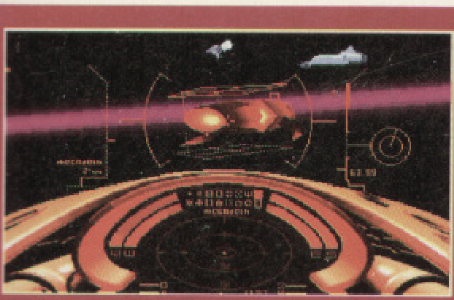
The scenarios are very varied including deep-space dogfights, planetary shield defence missions, radar site levelling and of course, lots of flying about through the tight, twisty corridors of Rexxon motherships. The 3D, while



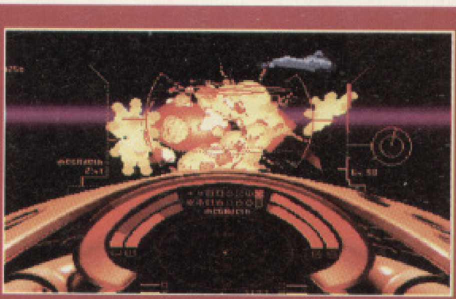
It's a bit like...

...TIE Fighter I suppose. Obviously, TIE Fighter is set in the Star Wars universe and the missions don't get even vaguely near any planets, but this is the other big, space combat sim on the market, so until the launch of Origin's Wing Commander III, if you're looking for a space adventure, you've got a choice of these two. But don't make your mind up right away, turn to page 78 and read the TIE Fighter review!

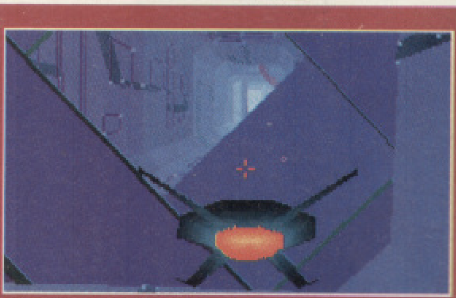




Launching into orbit from the starship Deliverance, there are more Rexxons about than I thought. The bug-ships are impervious to laser fire and torpedo strikes, so I hit them with...

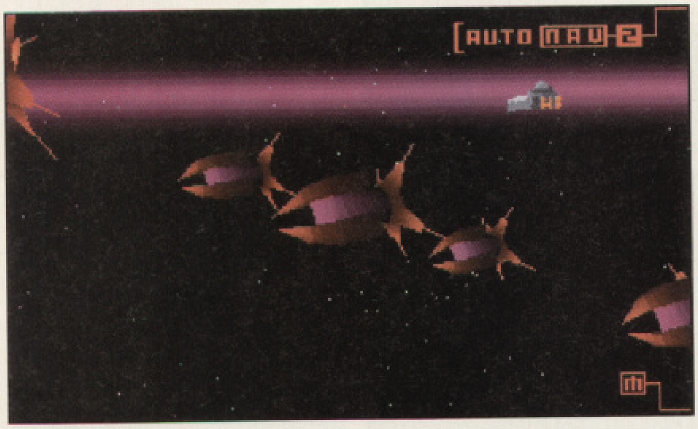


...the Megadeth gun. I fire a couple of shots at the engine housings and then get out of the way as the capital ship explodes. Kaboom! Now what happened to those fighters?

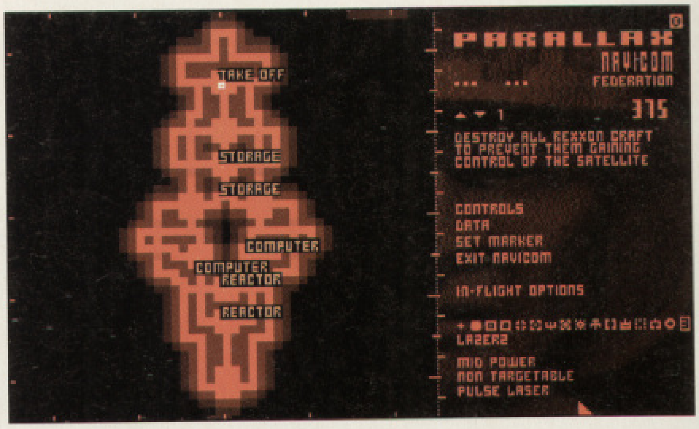


More bad news. The Rexxons have breached the defences of the orbital satellite. It's up to me to dive into the superstructure and weed them out. Slowly, slowy, catchy Rexxon.

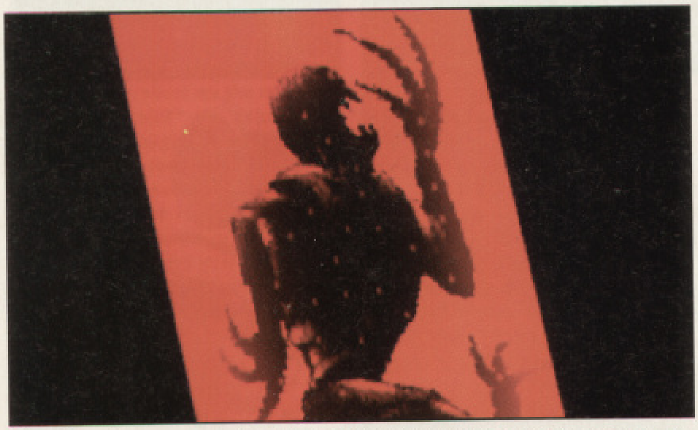
Trouble usually comes in, er, fives — there's safety in numbers for these weak Rexxon fighters



The Navicom is a vital piece of equipment allowing you to navigate on planets and in satellites



DESTROY ALL REXXON CRAFT TO PREVENT THEM GAINING CONTROL OF THE SATELLITE



(Above) If you lose one of your three lives, DefCorp can 'beam' you back to Terra Nova. But it's not a very pleasant process as you can see...

not as impressive as perhaps it could have been, is still slick and extremely fast. The attention to detail, however, is stunning; small gun turrets rise out of artillery emplacements and when you finally get to attack a Rexxon base, you can even shoot tiny Rexxon soldiers as they stand on aerial walkways.

The missions usually start off deceptively simple, i.e. DefCorp has lost contact with a research vessel, so you must nip out and see what the trouble is. Unfortunately, as you soon discover, it all gets a bit more complicated than this.

Nine times out of ten you are surprised by a Rexxon advance force and, as they attack a nearby satellite, so you must fly into the superstructure to defend it from within. Then, once you've beaten them off you find it's all a clever diversion and the main Rexxon attack force is actually massing for an attack on the planetary shield. So you zip along to defend that. Then, by and large, a couple of majorly huge bug-ships slip through your guard and you have to fly down over the planets surface to destroy them.

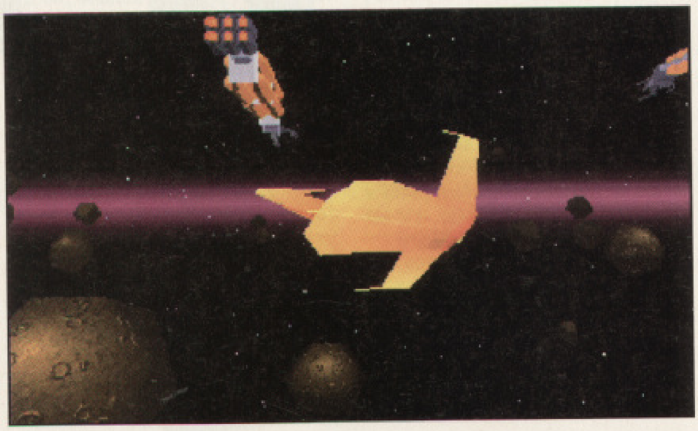
As you probably know by now, unlike TIE fighter the Inferno missions are not confined to deepest space. The 3D worlds created by DID are comlex and bloody enormous. As such, you can zoom across any of the seven planets and their moons, and can dodge towering mountain ranges, watch the lightning crackle in the sky and see dinosaurs lazing about in fields. There are also airless moons and even a water world to be discovered.

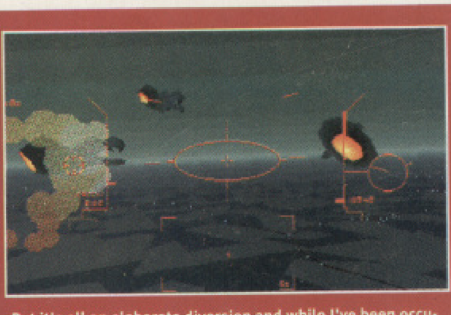
Like a flight sim, Inferno also has a number of useful internal and external views. As well as the usual cockpit view, you can choose the infinitely better 'invisible cockpit', the virtual cockpit mode or even the playable external view — an extra wide-angle view of your craft from behind. Ideal for the pilot who prefers arcade action, rather than limiting, sim-style cockpit views.

You can control your nimble fighter with either the joystick or the mouse and surprisingly the mouse control is very responsive, with the left button used to accelerate, the right to decelerate and the space bar on the keyboard used to fire the guns.

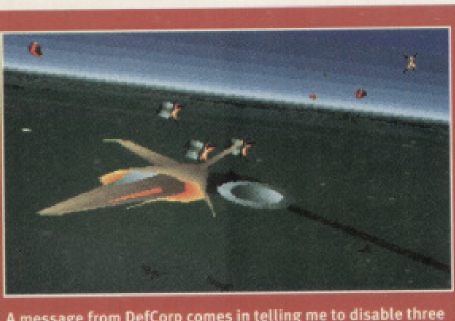
In fact it's very easy to get grips with and the up, down, left, right movement is similar in style to TIE Fighter. You might have noticed that DID's representation of space also features a hazy purple horizon and this is an invaluable aid

(Below) Problems in the asteroid belt as the Rexxons jump a peaceful research vessel.

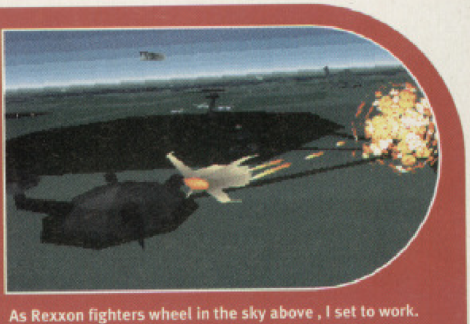




But it's all an elaborate diversion and while I've been occupied with the bug-ships, the main Rexxon invasion force has sneaked down onto the planet. It's dogfighting time...



A message from DefCorp comes in telling me to disable three Rexxon radar bases. This will cripple their scanning power and allow me to concentrate on the main Rexxon base.

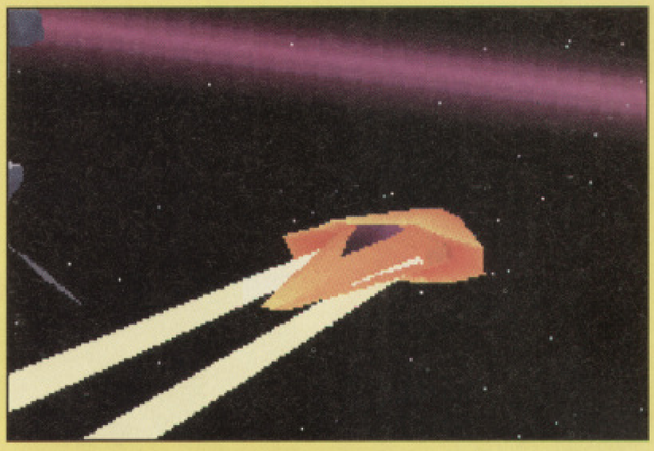


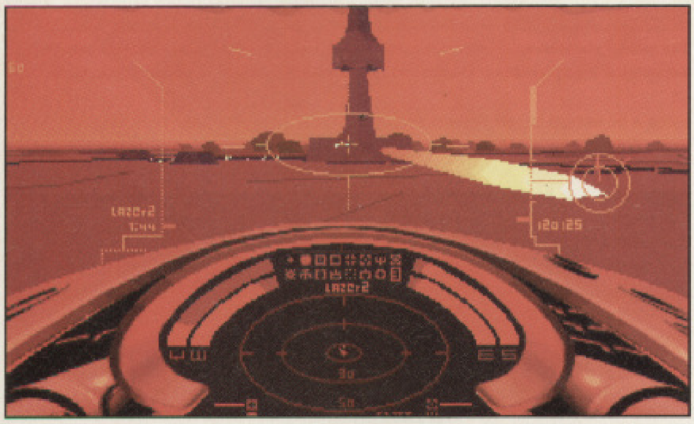
As Rexxon fighters wheel in the sky above , I set to work. Everything appears to go smoothly until five ships blow me away with their missiles. Luckily, I've still got two lives left...

Big Guns *again!*

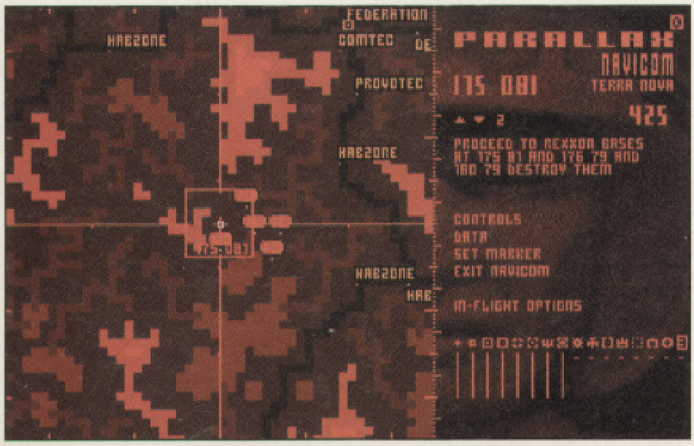
The Inferno craft is a single-seat astro-fighter with combat capability in all planetary atmospheres and inter-planetary space. It comes in a wide range of colours and also carries a huge variety of weapons including lasers, missiles and... oh here's a list.

LASER 1: Provides continuous fire and is the best weapon for close combat (see picture left).
LASER 2: A pulse repeater cannon, which is harder to fire accurately at fast moving targets, but does save valuable energy.
LASER 3: A mega-pulse blaster, which is bloody useless on fast moving targets but absolutely lethal on slow moving or stationary targets.
PLASMA TORPEDO 1: A short range close-combat projectile.
PLASMA TORPEDO 2: A medium range homing projectile.
PLASMA TORPEDO 3: A long-range, high-yield warhead with a smart proximity detonator.
CLUSTER WEAPON: A medium-energy plasma bomb that breaks up and detonates across a wide area to ensure a certain kill.
MEGADEATH: A high-energy, self-guiding anti-matter event. Large amounts of death. Oh yes.




Ground-attack missions provide a welcome interlude from the frantic, deep-space combat.

Pick your target on the Navicom, then zoom in to see what it looks like. An invaluable tool.



PROCEED TO REXXON BASES AT 175 81 AND 176 79 AND 180 79 DESTROY THEM

when you're trying to orientate yourself in a space battle. There are three types of autopilot too, but you can lose 'style' points if you use them too often. I mean, come on, you *are* supposed to be the best pilot in the known galaxy? You wouldn't catch Nigel Mansell using cruise control now would you?

While the combat is often fast and furious, unlike many space games, your weapons (especially some of the more powerful ones) are not available in unlimited quantities. However, you can pick up various combat pods or power-ups, which contain extra weapons, energy and shields during the missions. These pods are also vital because some contain synthesized Rexxon Regen chemicals (that help you regenerate) while a few contain an Invincible Shield power-up that makes your ship virtually indestructable for a short period of time.

This might sound stupid but, playing Inferno is almost like playing a 3D version of something like Project X, with some Pacman bits thrown in as bonus screens. You've got evil alien hordes, power-ups and the backgrounds and the lndscapes continually change. Add to that the fact that you often have to race through maze-like corridors collecting power-pills and you end up with a game that's a strange mix of many popular gaming styles.

In fact, the game mechanics and the 3D visuals give Inferno the look of a true-blue simulation but it's much more than just TFX in space. Inferno has the overwhelming feel of an arcade game.

And this is no bad thing. I happen to think that Inferno is a much better game than TIE Fighter, which frankly, bores me stupid. You see, there is nothing under TIE's new Gouraud-shaded graphics that you can't already get from X-Wing. And like X-Wing, Inferno is all about fighting an evil, tyrannical enemy, battling against overwhelming odds and defending your home whatever the cost.

What the game lacks, and I'm really nitpicking now, is X-Wing's intelligent wingmen and a bit of atmospheric communications traffic. It badly needs more friendly ships zipping around in the battle zones. Even if these ships were purely cosmetic, it would at least create the illusion that you're not fighting the war on your own.

I could criticise the basic nature of the 3D (particularly in light of Wing 3's stunning graphics), but while Inferno's polygons are not texture-mapped and light-source shaded, it does mean that they move at a decent speed, even on lower end machines.

Oh and the speech isn't as good as it could have been either. The human boss and the Rexxons sound great, but the hero... oh dear. He sounds thoroughly wet behind the ears and I wouldn't trust him with my shopping let alone the safety of the entire solar system.

Despite a few niggles, Inferno is a stunning game. I've been playing it solidly for a week and I'm still no nearer to the end. Sadly, though, when you're shooting the Rexxon ships, the dogfighting is rarely as nose-to-tail as it is in TIE Fighter, but whether you're dodging and weaving through an asteroid field or screaming over the surface of an airless moon, with the music pounding loud in your ears it's still a highly satisfying combat experience.

And that's really the crux. Is it actually fun to play? Absolutely — there can be no doubt about it. Obviously the long disc accessing is a real pain in the backside and it seriously interrupts the flow of the action, but on the whole, Inferno is a dazzling game. Brilliant, in fact. A true, cinematic space opera on a massive scale.

INFERNO

OCEAN/DID

(061) 832 6633

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

All major soundcards, Thrustmaster and Flightstick Pro joysticks.

THE ***GOOD...***

- Great 3D graphics and a superb soundtrack combine to create the ultimate space combat game.
- Unlike TIE Fighter, the missions are not just restricted to deepest space.
- With three modes of play and a cinematic feel, playing Inferno is the closest you'll get to the 'interactive movie'.

...AND THE ***BAD***

- Some of the speech is a bit naff.
- The transition between the 3D sequences and the cutscenes is woefully slow and highly frustrating.

Overall

92%

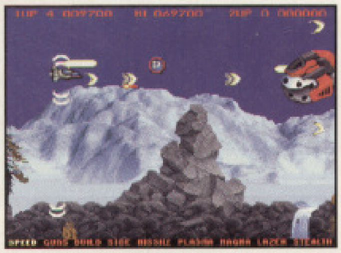
Alex Fraser pulls down his pants and gets ready to be whipped senseless by Team 17's super shoot-'em-up

Project-X

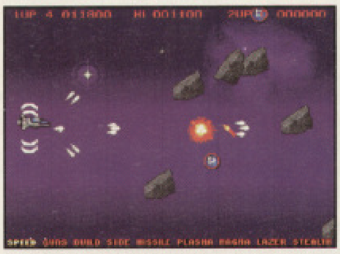
Project-X has taken its time getting on to the PC. Having appeared about two and a half years ago on the Commodore Amiga, this was the super-fast, super-groovy shoot-'em-up that gave Team 17 the golden image it has enjoyed ever since.

Project-X requires no silly plot about worlds colliding — or even brushing against each other slightly — for it is, quite simply, a festival of action, filled with guns the size of Canary Wharf, aliens from Hell and the sort of homing missiles most ten-year-old boys would sell their grannys for.

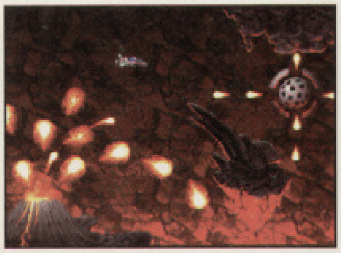
The action is viewed as a forced right-to-left scroll, with your ship sitting pretty right in the middle of whatever happens to be spewing forth on the screen at the time. The enemy appear in waves and patterns borne of an intensely cruel programmer, either relying on weight of numbers to bog you down, or sheer persistence of firepower and strength.



On the second level you have to avoid the surface as well as the nasties.



The natural phenomena — like these giant asteroids — are as lethal as the unnatural.



Some of the later levels are truly beautiful in their deadliness — mind the lava, mate.

Before you start the game, you can choose from three types of craft: one large and slow but powerful with it, one small and fast but poorly armed, and a compromise between the other two. The ship's initial weakness is soon corrected using a power-up based system whereby exploding aliens or, more specifically alien waves, release a small pod which, when collected, lights up one of a number of possible weapons shown along the base of the screen.

The more pods you collect, the further along the bar your light travels, and the further it travels the more impressive the weaponry on offer becomes. Anyone familiar with the horizontal arcade shoot-'em-ups of yesteryear such as Nemesis will be instantly at home with this system

When the desired weapon is highlighted, be it guns, plasma, missiles, speed-ups or whatever, a jiggle of the joystick or a tap on the TAB key will reward you with firepower like never before. Each weapon also has a number of 'strength' levels, so by collecting the same weapon several times, you can build yourself up an almighty set of guns and missiles.

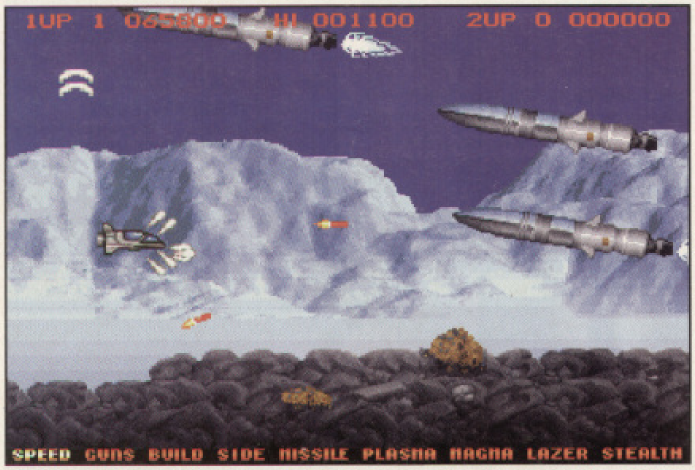
The levels change in appearance and alien types, changing from empty space, to rocky land, to volcanic caves. The landscape does affect the game in as much as you need to avoid colliding with obstacles and, for instance, lava bolts thrown from the active volcanoes. At the end of each level, the obligatory huge guardian trundles into view, requiring an above average amount of hits before leaving with his bottom on fire.

Should you lose a life, you'll be penalised by having your overall weapon levels reduced and, as you might imagine, if you've managed to create a right old war machine, you can find yourself suddenly sadly lacking right in the middle of a gittish level.

Project-X, though nothing new concept-wise, is refreshingly arcade-like, and you'll be hard pushed to find much worth comparing it to on PC. Of course, it's fair to say that some people might find it lacking in any real substance, simply because not everybody gets off on 'continuous blasting without thought'.

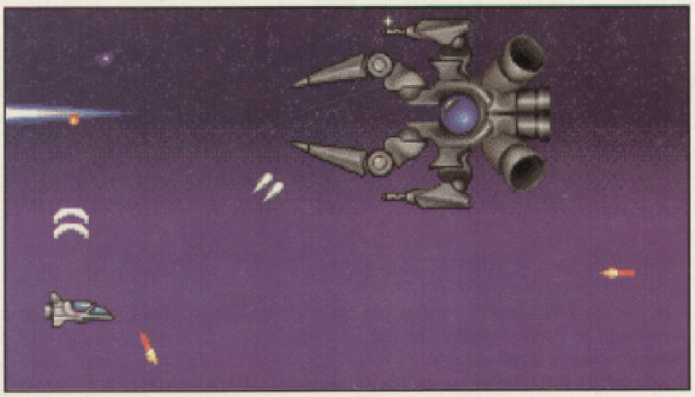
But for what it is Project-X is hard to fault, and the only real decision to be made before buying it is whether you're going to get very far into the game before frustration and lack of reward makes you switch off.

So, not an obvious game to appear on the PC, but given the lack of competition as far as solid, good old fashioned shoot-'em-ups for the machine go, Project-X is definitely worth recommending to all you mindless missile heads out there.



(Above) You've obviously got the enemy scared — but aren't those giant missiles just a little *excessive*?

(Below) At the end of every level you have to get past a massive guardian which takes a bellyfull of laser before it dies.



PROJECT X

TEAM 17/EAST POINT

(0924) 385903

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

*THE **GOOD...***

- There's really nothing else like it on your PC.
- If you like big, big, BIG weapons, you'll love this.
- Annoys you just enough to keep you coming back for more.

*...AND THE **BAD***

- Obviously, it's not every PC owner's cup of tea.
- Perhaps a bit limited and a tad dated compared to some of the other recent releases on PC, i.e. Doom.

Overall

81%

*"Wondrous, macabre, eldritch...
it's not often I thank someone
for a nightmare."*
David Sears-COMPUTE Magazine

*"The graphical images conjured
up by the marriage of Giger's work
and the computer animation are
outstanding."*
PC Home Magazine

Software Publisher's Association's
Excellence in Software Award Winner for
Best Fantasy Role-Playing/Adventure Program

*"....buy it now and lose yourself in
a world you thought only existed
in your worst nightmares."*
90% and PC Zone Classic
PC Zone Magazine

DARKSEED™

Based upon the fantastic artwork of H.R.GIGER

CYBERDREAMS™

AVAILABLE FOR THE IBM PC AND COMPATIBLES, COMMODORE AMIGA,
AMIGA CD-32 AND APPLE MACINTOSH FLOPPY DISKETTE AND CD-ROM.

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JUST RELEASED FOR THE IBM PC AND
COMPATIBLES CD-ROM AND AMIGA CD-32.

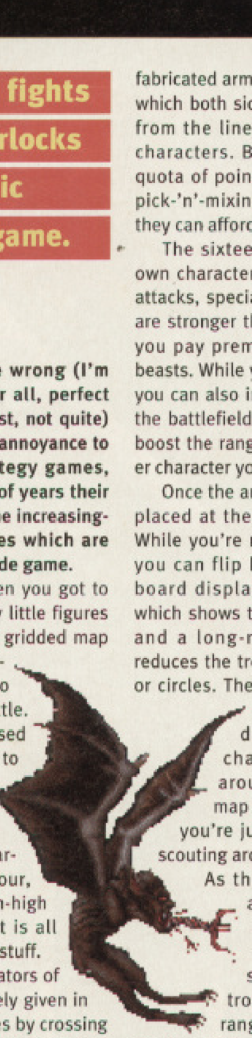
COMING IN SEPTEMBER 1994 FOR THE
SEGA CD SYSTEM.

Dark Legions

David Upchurch fights demons and warlocks in SSI's fantastic strategy boardgame.

I could be wrong (I'm not, after all, perfect — at least, not quite) but it must be of growing annoyance to acolytes of fantasy strategy games, that over the past couple of years their favourite genre has become increasingly adulterated with games which are half-boardgame, half-arcade game.

Gone are the days when you got to move your band of chunky little figures around a two-dimensional gridded map and were happy to let random numbers decide who lived and who died in battle. Ever since developers realised they needed to sell games to as many people as possible they've made everything more universally appealing. Now the characters are all 3D, 256-colour, fully-animated, half-screen-high works of art, and combat is all hands-on, reaction-testing stuff.



Silicon Knights, the creators of Dark Legions, have definitely given in to these populist tendencies by crossing Battle Chess with Gauntlet and coming up with a game much like the one Chewbacca liked to play when the Millennium Falcon was in hyperspace.

In Dark Legions, two players (human or computer) take turns to get their armies of demons, elementals and sorcerors from one end of a battlefield to the other. Both armies have one soldier who carries a mystical orb, and to win the battle you have to find the guy with the orb and kill him. Success isn't just dependent on strategic thinking, because when two characters meet they battle it out to the death in a short arcade sequence.

The fun starts with you selecting either a ready-built scenario with prefabricated armies, or an all-new battle in which both sides get to pick their team from the line-up of sixteen different characters. Both players are given a quota of points which they can spend pick-'n'-mixing as many characters as they can afford.

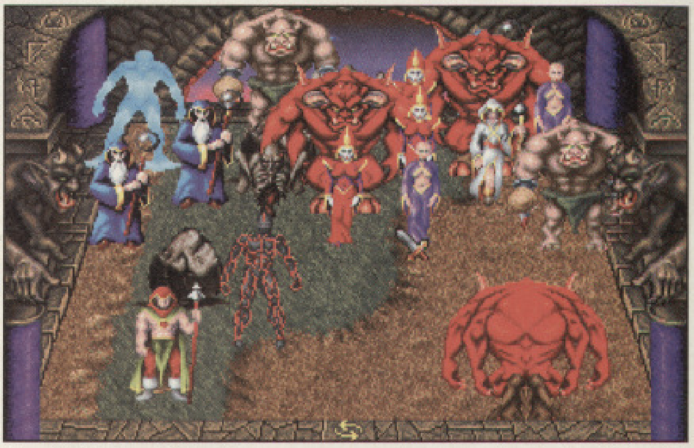
The sixteen species all have their own characteristics (movement range, attacks, special powers, etc) and some are stronger than others, but of course you pay premium points for the best beasts. While you're picking your troops you can also invest in traps to place on the battlefield and magical rings which boost the range or strength of whichever character you give them to.

Once the armies are finalised they're placed at the two ends of the board. While you're manoeuvring your forces you can flip between two scrollable board displays, a 3D close-up view which shows the huge monster sprites, and a long-range map view which reduces the troops to coloured squares or circles. The former looks great, and you get to see the wonderful animation on the characters as they stomp around, but the long-range map is much quicker to use if you're just positioning troops or scouting around for the enemy.

As the game begins the two armies are invisible to each other, and you only find out where the other side are when one of their troops comes within visual range (i.e. a screen's width) of your boys, so the first thing on the agenda is to send your fastest characters up the board on scouting missions.

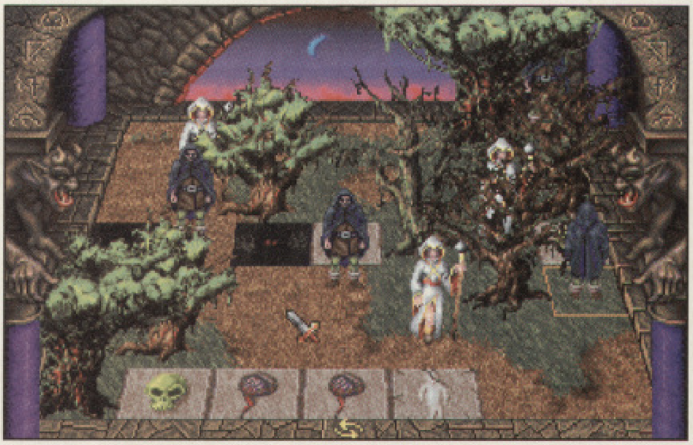
Moving characters around is a simple matter of left-clicking on them, then clicking on one of the illuminated squares which indicate their movement range. You can also issue special movement orders, such as getting characters to escort each other or go to the aid of the orb holder.

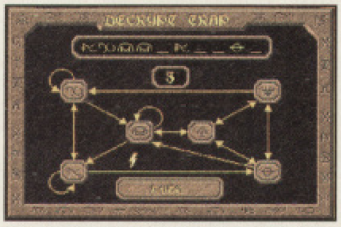
Sending a character into battle is a simple matter of moving them to the same square as an enemy. As soon as they arrive you get a chilling battle cry coming through your speakers (some of them really are a bit sinister!), then the screen switches to show a bird's-eye



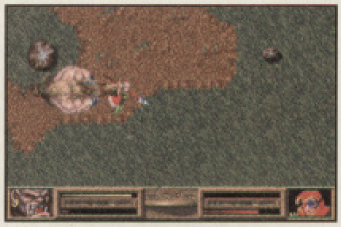
(Above) Although pretty, the 3D view can run very slowly unless you've got a decent PC and it also makes it hard to work out overall strategies.

(Below) You can't see the wood — or rather, the characters — for the trees! In this sort of very confusing situation, you're best switching to the 2D view.





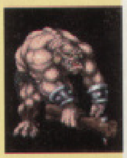
Only thieves can decrypt traps, and it's via this screen. You have to use the flowchart to work out which missing rune comes next in the sequence at the top of the screen. Hit the AUTO button if you're stuck and want to take a chance.



Outmatched! The weedy Templar takes an almighty thwack to the nut from this troll's club. Die-hard fantasy fans might not enjoy these arcade-like sequences, but for the rest of us they provide welcome respite from the tactical grind.

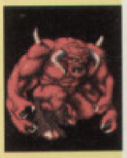
Let's do the monster mash!

TROLLS



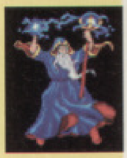
Trolls are literally rock hard, but slow. They have the power to morph into rocks which block routes.

DEMONS



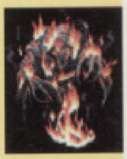
Demons are really tough in combat, though don't get them too close to a wizard or things could get very frosty.

WIZARDS



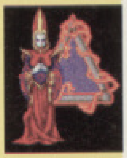
Wizards can magically freeze any enemy in sight. Demons, with their fiery nature, are particularly in danger!

WRAITHS



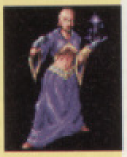
Wraiths teleport past obstacles, then drain their victim's life energy to feed their own. How very pleasant.

CONJURORS



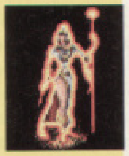
Conjurors can fill the battlefield with living clones of certain warriors. They make Paul Daniels look very weedy.

ILLUSIONISTS



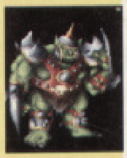
Illusionists can create strange mirages and illusory characters to distract or harrass enemy forces.

SEERS



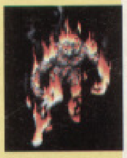
Seers can spot hidden traps and dispel illusory characters as soon as they come into view. Tough luck, illusionists.

ORCS



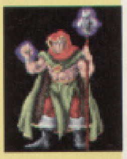
Orcs are grunts, the cannon-fodder of your army. They're tough soldiers, but they have no special abilities.

FIRE ELEMENTALS



Fire Elementals are useful in combat because of their excellent ranged attacks — handy for weakening the enemy.

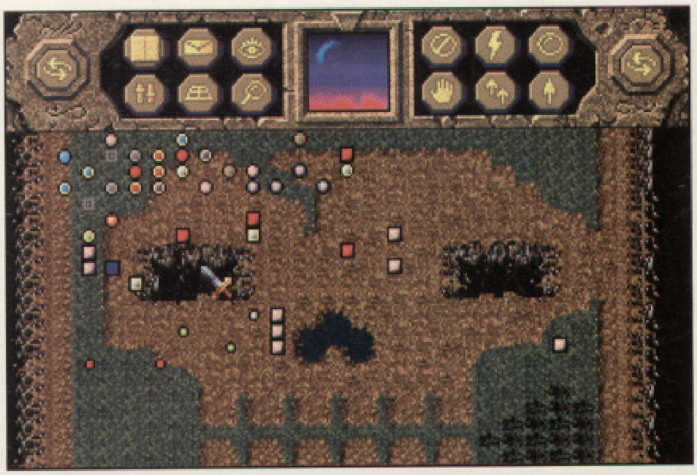
TEMPLARS



Templars are healers. Keep your characters close to one another and their energy is replenished faster than usual.

It's a bit like...

It's not exactly Chess but Dark Legions is definitely a related game, so I guess the closest thing to it is something like Battle Chess with its animated characters who aren't averse to hacking each other's legs off. The superior presentation and more flexible and entertaining gameplay make Dark Legions preferable, though.



The 2D view is much quicker and simpler to use than the 3D one, but then you don't get to see all the smart character animations.

view of a plain with boulders and scrubby trees dotted around.

In one corner of the screen there's your bloke and in the other is your opponent's. Then, using keys or a joystick you have to chase each other around the rugged rocks and duke it out to the death. Every character handles differently in battle and all of them have at least two attacks, one of which is usually ranged.

The only trouble is using such moves saps your attack power, indicated on a bar at the bottom of the screen, and if you use a couple of powerful attacks in close succession you then have to run and hide while you regain your strength.

It's usually the arcade sections that decide the outcome of the battle because, although some characters are weaker than others, a player with a bit of arcade experience can take almost any one of them into battle against a more powerful opponent and stand a good chance of coming out on top.

That being the case you can usually get away with just charging your stronger characters up the field and wiping out all opposition as you meet it. Thinking about tactical play is often not required. Mind you, I say that, but it's not really true if you're playing another human opponent or the computer on its highest skill setting. With the computer on 'Merciless' it follows a definite plan of finding your weakest characters and picking them off first, and in battle it's fast and intelligent, never hesitating to use more devastating special moves when it gets the chance.

To be honest with you I didn't get the chance to play a real two-player game, though I did try, playing both sides myself, and discovered one obvious flaw. If you're playing against someone on the same machine you get into those situations where you have to avert your eyes from the screen or leave the room while your opponent is making his move, otherwise you'll know where his forces are. It's unavoidable, I suppose, but it seems a bit silly nonetheless.

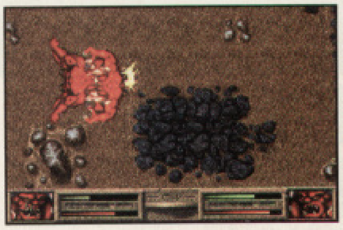
Fair do's, though. Judging by the designers' notes the two-player mode was really meant for modem or direct link play, and this is undoubtedly the best way to play... as long as you have a very large telephone budget and are prepared to stay on the line for about an hour and a half until the battle is won.

So, while there are a couple of flaws in Dark Legions, I must say that I did enjoy playing it. The level of strategic thinking required is probably still a bit low for real fans of this type of game, and no doubt they would baulk at having to endure arcade combat scenes, but I'm not one of their number. The fight scenes I found entertaining and the tactics weren't heavy going.

Dark Legions is really carried off by the quality of the sounds and graphics, though. The characters are finely detailed and wonderfully animated, and the music and sounds add loads of atmosphere. Even some of the special graphic effects are wonderful, as you get monsters stepping out of dimensional portals onto the battlefield, or a character stepping on a void trap being picked up by a phantom hand and carried off somewhere nasty.

I suppose the best thing about Dark Legions is that if you're prepared to put a lot into setting up a game you can get a lot more out of it, and there are so many 'bonus' facets to the gameplay. For example, planting traps and watching your enemies walk into them is most satisfying, as is finding your enemy's traps and decrypting them. Also, you need to keep an eye on the time of day as shown by the colour of the skyline, because some characters fare better if they're sent into battle at night.

Considering that they're new at this game, Silicon Knights have made an excellent job of their debut title, and I for one will be watching out for their future stuff.



A pair of demons, the most powerful of all the creatures in the game, get together in a scorching barbecue-breathed barney! Well done — or, at least, one of them will be.

DARK LEGIONS

US Gold/SSI

(021) 625 3388

£35.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 35Mb of hard disk space and mouse

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, Wave Blaster and Sound Canvas soundcards.

THE GOOD...

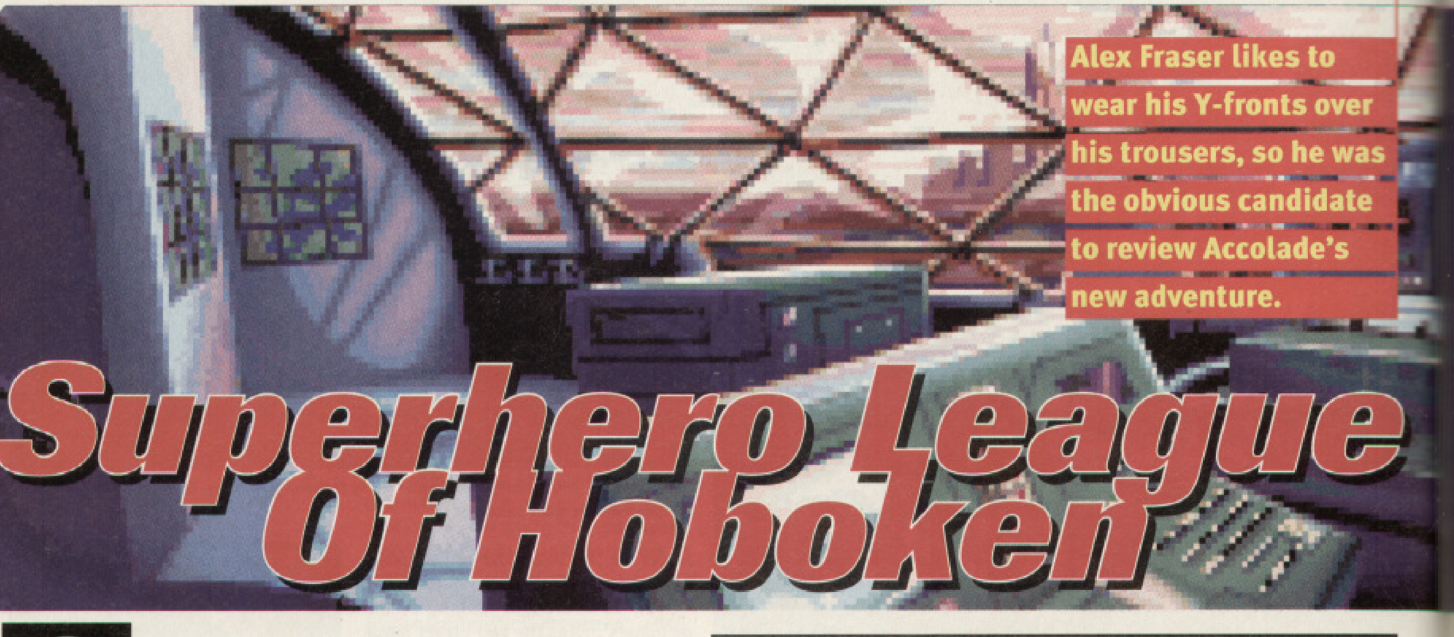
- Wonderfully well-animated graphics with lots of variety.
- Excellent sound effects throughout.
- Great fun for anyone who's not a major strategy-head.

...AND THE BAD

- TIf you *are* a major strategy-head it might seem a bit low-brow.
- Two player mode is a little flawed and I can't see it being played over the phone much in this country.

Overall

85%

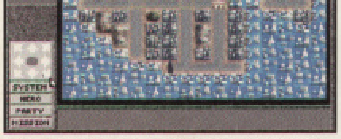


Alex Fraser likes to wear his Y-fronts over his trousers, so he was the obvious candidate to review Accolade's new adventure.

Superhero League Of Hoboken

The future, it seems, is not a very pleasant place. Not only is New York half submerged under water and half radioactive, it's also crawling with vile mutoids — Albino Winos, evil McMutant burger men and so on. But thankfully scores of fine, upstanding and awesomely-powerful superheroes have banded together to form Superhero Leagues in an effort to rid the place of these horrible monsters.

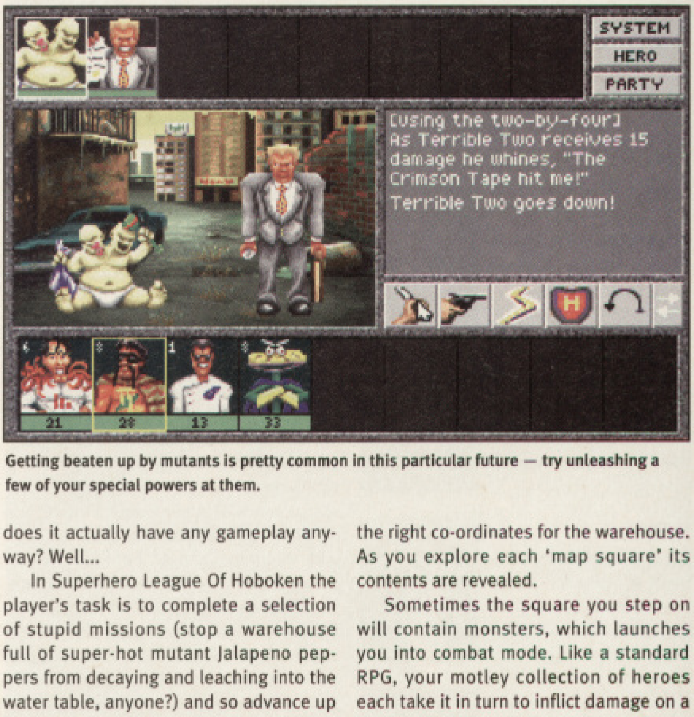
As The Crimson Tape, leader of the Superhero League Of Hoboken, your aim is to guide your merry band of wrong-righters to the top of the league of Leagues. Sadly, however, your team of superheroes is the most pathetic collection of masked men ever assembled, boasting superpowers as fantastic as folding up road maps and being able to tell the topping on a pizza without opening the box. It isn't going to be easy.



As you explore an area the map will gradually be revealed. You get an exploration bonus if you uncover every map square.

It has to be said that Superhero League Of Hoboken, created by Steve Meretzky, is a very strange game. It's not quite an adventure and it's not quite a role-playing game, but falls somewhere between the two. It's also a sort of point-'n'-click type game, but having said that it'll take you back a few years because it feels quite old fashioned.

There's none of your fancy scrolling in this game, matey — it's almost as basic as those Infocom text adventures which had a couple of pictures to illustrate them (except that you don't have to do any typing, thank God) so you certainly can't accuse the game of being all graphics and no gameplay. What graphics there are are fine, but they won't make you salivate and the question is: does it actually have any gameplay anyway? Well...



[using the two-by-four]
As Terrible Two receives 15 damage he whines, "The Crimson Tape hit me!"
Terrible Two goes down!

Getting beaten up by mutants is pretty common in this particular future — try unleashing a few of your special powers at them.

In Superhero League Of Hoboken the player's task is to complete a selection of stupid missions (stop a warehouse full of super-hot mutant Jalapeno peppers from decaying and leaching into the water table, anyone?) and so advance up the League table, as well as patrol the area and beat up any nasty mutants.

You start the game in your HQ, with a list of possible missions (or impossible missions come to that) on the computer and five inept superheroes sat in the cafeteria. Your first step is to choose a mission — your second step is to choose three heroes to accompany you.

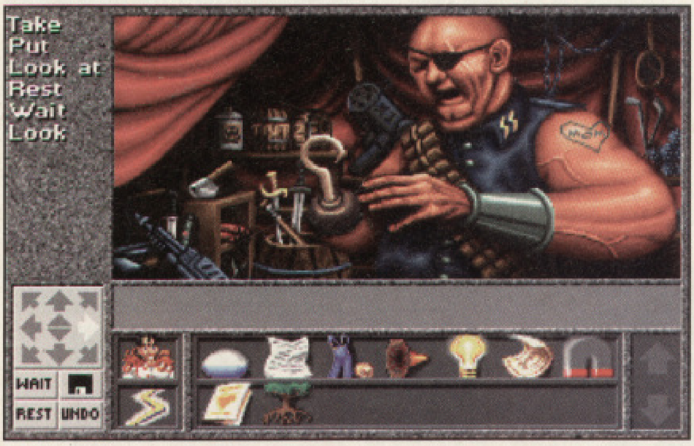
Let's say that you opt for the Jalapeno peppers mission I mentioned above. Peppers are spicy, so it makes sense to include the Iron Tummy (who can eat spicy food without discomfort). The other two members are up to you.

On leaving the HQ you're presented with a map screen of the Hoboken area. You then need to locate where the peppers are stored, which means much trudging around the map until you reach the right co-ordinates for the warehouse. As you explore each 'map square' its contents are revealed.

Sometimes the square you step on will contain monsters, which launches you into combat mode. Like a standard RPG, your motley collection of heroes each take it in turn to inflict damage on a nasty, choosing whether to use a knife-type weapon (anything from a rusty nail to a chainsaw), a missile weapon (ranging from a spitball gun to a laser) or a superpower (rust your opponents, give them root rot, bore them to sleep or whatever it is that your superhero excels at). Then the baddies take their turn.

This continues until either you destroy them, they destroy you or you run away. If you win, they'll often leave behind money or useful items, but if they win it's game over. And the tougher you get through experience, the tougher and more numerous your mutant foes get.

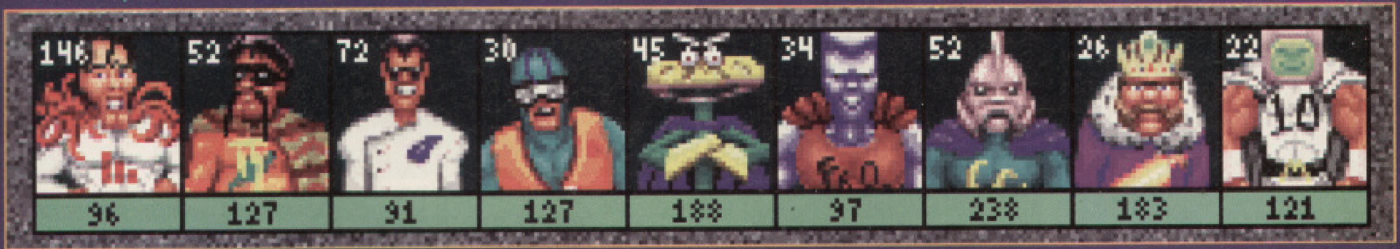
On the other hand, you could land on a square which contains a place of interest. This could be a market square, where you can buy all sorts of useful stuff, or it could be a tube station (if you



Every market has a selection of stalls where you can buy all sorts of weird and wonderful things to help you on your way. Don't mess with the owner of the weapons shop, though.

The **Not-So-**Superheroes

Here they are, kids — the Superhero League Of Hoboken! Why not try and collect the set?



The Crimson Tape
The boss of the Superhero League Of Hoboken. His superpower — the ability to create organisational charts — makes him a natural leader.

The Iron Tummy
Faced with an implacable mutant vindaloo? No sweat, chum. The Iron Tummy's special ability is being able to eat spicy food without discomfort.

Tropical Oil Man
This guy's a bit oily, and has the awe-inspiring ability to raise the cholesterol levels of his enemies through thought alone. Not one of Dave's favourites...

Treader Man
If you want to explore New York's submerged ruins, then add this dapper chap to your party. He is Really Good at Treading Water. Always handy.

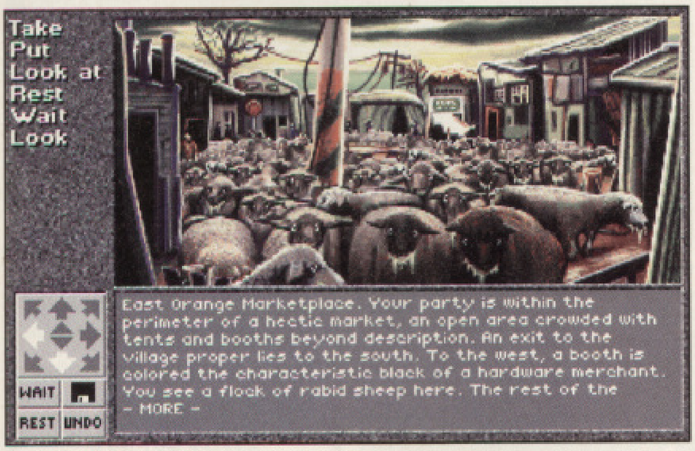
RoboMop
One guy that we'd find really useful here at PC GAMES is RoboMop — he can clean up almost any mess. But never say "I think you missed a bit..." to him.

Oxide Man
Keep being attacked by gangs of cyborg mutants? Oxide Man is gifted with the power to rust any metal. Keep him clear of people with fillings, though.

The Caped Cod
Another character who can tread water with the best of them. On top of that he also wears the daftest costume of the lot — which is saying something.

King Midas
This guy has the Midas Touch, but instead of turning things to gold, he can transform a totally useless object into something *really* useful.

The Mighty Magnitude
This experienced hero can make things ten times bigger or smaller than they were. Be sure to include him on the final mission.



East Orange Marketplace. Your party is within the perimeter of a hectic market, an open area crowded with tents and booths beyond description. An exit to the village proper lies to the south. To the west, a booth is colored the characteristic black of a hardware merchant. You see a flock of rabid sheep here. The rest of the
- MORE -

"Tread carefully, my super-powered chums, for we have entered a region where rabid sheep dwell!" This is a typical market place in Superhero League Of Hoboken...

have the requisite travel card you can take the train to another location), or even the location of your next mission.

When you enter a building, market square or whatever, a still picture of that place pops up. You can't wander around exploring it, although you can 'interact' with it to a certain extent: picking things up, looking at things, talking to people or whatever.

When you finally reach the warehouse, you do the obvious thing: you get Iron Tummy to eat the peppers. When the peppers have disappeared into Iron Tummy's, er, tummy, you spot a cloth on the floor. It might be useful later, so you pick it up. Mission completed, it's back to base to log your achievements on to the computer and choose a new mission.

Obviously, the mission I've mentioned here is very simple but later missions become far more complex; for example, you might have to journey to a market in a different sector so that you can buy a travel pass to get somewhere else. The thing is, the missions are only described very briefly on the computer, so you could be wandering around for hours trying to figure out what you need to do to complete them. SLoH is often very obscure.

To complete the last mission of the first set, for instance, you need the cloth you found under the peppers. But the cloth is no good on its own, oh no. It has to be soaked in sheep spit left behind after one mission, transmission fluid left after another and plant soil from a third. You can then use the impregnated cloth on a metal wall to melt it.

But how the Hell are you supposed to work that out on your own? Many of the puzzles seem to have no logic behind them, so working them out is down to trial and error. Unfortunately, one small mistake can cost you dearly.

For example, the plant soil (which I was supposed to clean up with the cloth) was left behind after a mission in a church. Silly me, I didn't think to use the cloth on the soil and after several hours trying to figure out how to get through the metal wall — failing dismally every time — I gave up and looked at the cheat sheet (which, incidentally, is not given away with the game). Enlightened, I returned to the church and — lo and behold! — I couldn't get back in!

In the end, I did complete the game, but only because I cheated. Now I've completed — unaided, I might add — a lot of adventures and RPGs in my time, but there's absolutely no way I could get through Superheroes without help. It's bloody impossible.

That said, the game does have a quirky charm of its own — I had the strange urge to complete it and it did keep me hooked throughout. I had an almost masochistic desire to explore all the map areas and fight off all the slavering mutant beasties, though I can't for the life of me work out why.

Perhaps it's because I, like a lot of people who play RPGs, enjoy seeing my characters progress. Killing nasties and completing missions earns you points, and the more points you have the higher up the League you'll get. And the higher you get, the more superheroes will flock to join your humble outfit. You can also improve your existing characters by getting hold of food (vegetables improve toughness, meat equals brawn and fish boosts mental powers) or isotopes (which give characters new powers).

But much as I enjoyed the game, it's too hard, too obscure and too dated. The humour is also a bit hit and miss, since it contains quite a few references to things only Americans will understand. All in all, I'm really not sure who it's supposed to appeal to — the idea of whacky superheroes is good but the game is... well, it's not that great.

It's a bit like...

Superheroes is remarkable similar in style to Companions Of Xanth — in fact, the interface is almost identical. The difference is that, while The Superhero League Of Hoboken has sprung from the warped imagination of Steve Meretzky, Xanth is based on the Piers Anthony's novel, Demons Don't Dream, and is slightly better for it.

Take
Put
Look at
Open
Close
Talk to
Look

SUPERHERO LEAGUE OF HOBOKEN

ACCOLADE/LEGEND

(081) 788 0200

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 8Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The game's humour may not be to everyone's taste, but I enjoyed it.
- Strangely, perversely, infuriatingly addictive — and I don't know why.

...AND THE BAD

- Puzzles are sometimes too obscure.
- The interface is a bit old-fashioned.
- One small mistake early on can really screw things up for you later in the game.

Overall

62%

Ishar 3

Alex Fraser, in a recumbent mode, takes on the perils of another Dungeon Master clone.

Dear reader, I'm writing this review from my bed. I say this neither to shock nor to titillate, but simply because it's the truth. It's 10 pm, I've spent all day playing Ishar 3 "The Seven Gates of Infinity" and it's got me so exhausted and exasperated that I can barely make it into an upright seated position. You see, this isn't a game — it's an ordeal!

The story starts with Shandar, the wizard supposedly killed off at the end of Ishar 2. Now, it appears, Shandar is planning to stage a triumphant comeback at the next conjunction of the planets, which by a stunning coincidence is due any minute now. Only then can Shandar's revived consciousness take possession of a new body, that of a 2,000 year old black dragon warlord named Wohratax.

Now, this would surely be a bad break for us all but by an amazing stroke of luck, this planetary conjunction also causes seven interdimensional gates to open up all over the space-time continuum. Having drawn the short straw, you have to use the gates to go back in time to an era before Wohratax was born and make sure he never exists, thus preventing Shandar from possessing his body 2,000 years later.

It's a bloody big job all right, but you don't have to go it alone because, in true Dungeon Master-type RPG style, Ishar 3 puts you in command of a party of five brave adventurers. They're the standard sorts: Elven wizards; Dwarvish murderers (eh?); Human clerks (double 'eh?'). You can either construct your own party before you start, recruit from inns along the way or, if you're a real Ishar nutter, reload your favourite heroes from your past Ishar conquests.

Ishar 3's game manual doesn't go into much detail regarding the oh-so-subtle differences between the character types, but it seems all you need to understand is that the brainy guys (the scholars, clerks, priests) handle the magic, and the usual musclemen (the rangers and so forth) do the hand-to-hand combat.

There is one interesting nuance, however, because as certain races have an inherent hatred of other races, and certain individuals (such as murderers and thieves) have an inherent hatred of people in general, you can have disputes and even murders breaking out within the party.

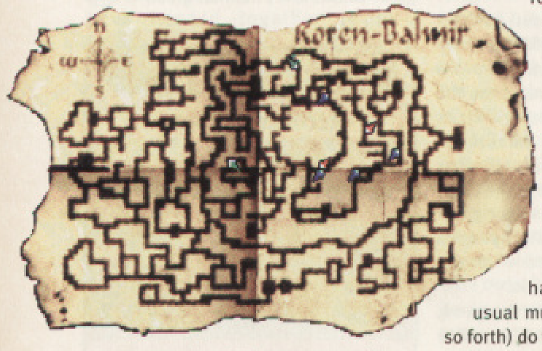
Dwarven clerics won't administer first aid to Elves, for example, and particularly nasty characters will often nick off while the party sleeps. An interesting nuance indeed, and yet at the same time, a real pain in the butt because lost characters take their belongings with them. Also, having to keep finding replacements disrupts the flow of the game and certainly isn't conducive to the feeling of running a 'together' team.

As for the rest of the game, it works in a pretty similar way to every other Dungeon Master/Eye of the Beholder clone. Your surroundings are displayed in a flick-screen 3D window. The command system is all icon-driven and when you come across items you simply click on them then put them in a character's rucksack. You place weapon icons in hand icons then click on them to fight. You concoct spells by bringing together different ingredients, and experience brings better combat and magic skills.

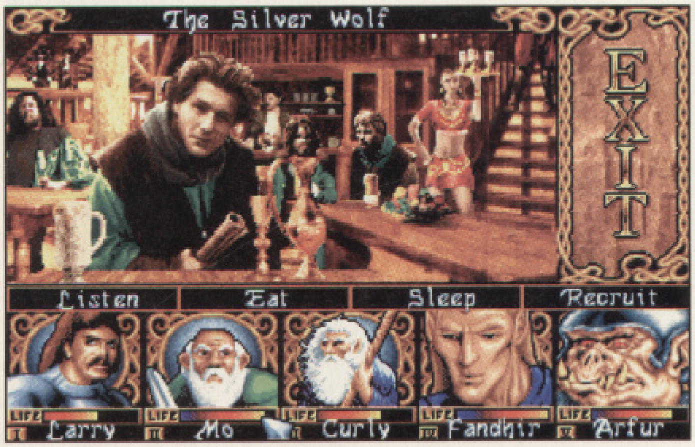
One difference that Silmarils emphasize in their publicity blurb is the fact that the plot isn't constrictingly linear. That's true, but it's also true that the plot is so skimpily fleshed out during the course of the game that for the most part you're not sure what you're meant to be doing next. The area to explore, in the first two settings at least, is huge but all the locations look confusingly similar and in most of them there's nothing of consequence going on, so you can spend ages going round in circles.

The biggest challenge involved in the first level is overcoming the sheer boredom induced while traipsing around anonymous streets, dropping into inns to hear the same vague clues, and running into ridiculously posed digitised actors wearing silly costumes. I've never played any of the previous Ishar titles but if they were anything like this one I'm amazed the series ever made it to three games.

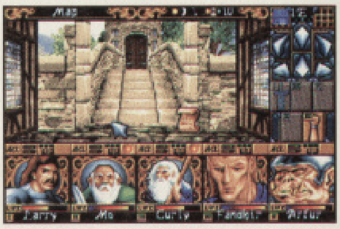
For all its supposed sophistication the action is tedious and not remotely involving and the game's best features are certainly nothing new these days. Compared to the current crop of similar RPGs on the shelves (and the old classics which are doing the rounds at knock-down prices), Ishar 3 appears decidedly second-rate.



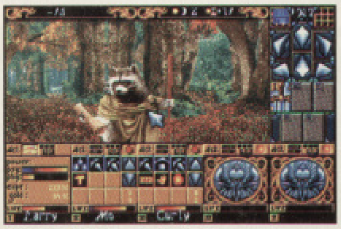
It's easy to get lost in the anonymous city streets at the start of the game, so constant recourse to the map is essential.



This Christian Slater looky-likey is the key to reaching the first gate — buy him dinner and he'll get you in.



At last! The entrance to the first gate! Now, how do I get in?



A rare moment of interest — a racoon with a message.

ISHAR 3

SILMARILS/DAZE MARKETING

(071) 328 2762

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 6Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- The sound effects are pretty good, I suppose.
- You can load in saved parties from Ishars 1 and 2.

...AND THE BAD

- Game is full of vast empty spaces — Boredom City.
- It's very easy to get lost.
- The combat system is fiddly
- The 'characterisation' system needs a bit of work
- Oh, and the music is naff.

Overall

50%

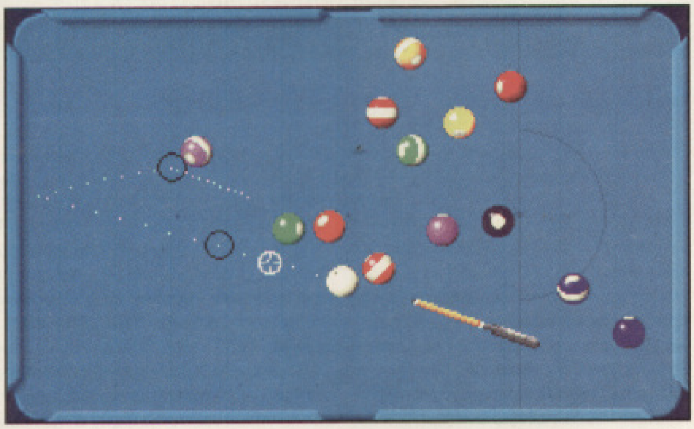
Dean Evans chalks up his cue and does battle with Team 17's latest.

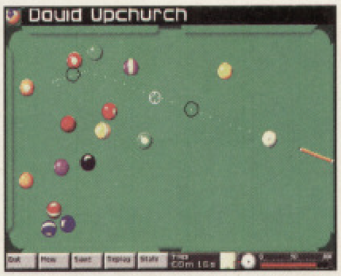
Arcade Pool

How often do you hear us saying "It looks incredible, but where's the gameplay?" What, once an issue? Twice an issue? Probably more. Well, you'll get none of that here, because with Team 17's Arcade Pool we have a game that doesn't rely on 3D rendered intros, VR or CD, just simple gameplay straight out of yesteryear.

Though in more recent times everyone's got a bit carried away with their 3D viewpoints and fly-by camera angles, as far as I'm concerned, when it comes to having fun, the simpler the better, and this is the beauty of Arcade Pool.

The instructions couldn't be easier really; you set your target using the mouse, while the strength of shot and spin to the ball are set by manipulating an extremely basic control panel. Press fire and, er... that's it! You can make things even easier for yourself by utilising a 'dotted line' guide on the table, which gives an indication of the cue ball's likely path (which is also a handy cheat for getting out of snookers!)





Team 17 have, rather smartly, included about as many variations on Pool as you could wish for, including UK and US versions of all games — 8-ball, 9-ball, speed ball, etc — as well as tournament challenges, where up to eight players can bash it out against each other and/or a host of computer opponents.

It's in these 'human vs human' events that the game really shines, and though it's not as good as sitting down the pub, this at least gets some fair competition going. Why do I say that? Well, being honest, there really is nothing more frustrating than snookering your CPU opponent, only to have him execute some ludicrous nine-ball plant that Jimmy White would be proud of (if he played pool no doubt — Ed).

Fortunately, this only happens occasionally in very high level games, and considering Arcade Pool's attractive price (not to mention the fact that it's already topped the Amiga's charts) this could be the definitive time-waster for everyone's collection.

ARCADE POOL

TEAM 17/EAST POINT

(0924) 291867

£14.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

16Mhz 386, VGA, 640K, 1Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Super-simple control system.
- Satisfyingly accurate and fluid ball behaviour.
- Loads of game options.

...AND THE BAD

- Sometimes a bit frustrating because of the computer opponents' frequently supernatural skill.

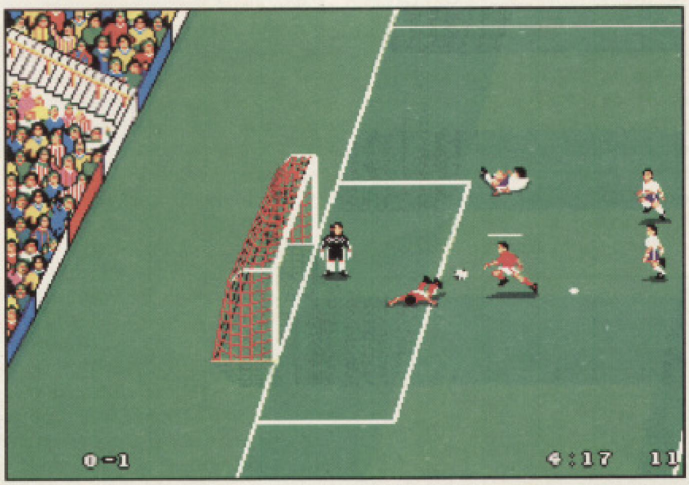
Overall

84%

Alex Fraser kicks about Anco's soccer super-sequel.

Kick Off 3

We like to think that we know everything there is to know, and see everything there is to see as far as the games industry goes. It is, then, with some surprise that I opened an industry paper recently to see that Kick Off 3 was in the charts at number four. "Hang on," thought I, "we haven't even seen this game yet. How come the software company involved hasn't sent any copies out for review and yet it's doing so well?" Of course, then the game arrived on my desk, and all became clear...



I think that it's probably fair to say that Kick Off 3 is shifting units because it's a well-known name, and that the humble PC and Amiga users have seen the undoubted delights of the console versions and have thus been duped into expecting much the same on their own machines (and what with us not having seen the game or reviewed it yet, how were you to know otherwise? See? Not as stupid as they look these softies, are they?)

Well, I'm telling you now — if you see Kick Off 3 on PC, RUN AWAY VERY QUICKLY. Yes, sorry folks, but this is most definitely a different beast to that previously viewed on the SNES and Mega Drive. In fact, if it weren't for the name you'd not even guess they were remotely related.

So why's it all so bad? Well, for a start the graphics are very shoddy, with EGA-reminiscent sprites flitting in a unconvincing manner around a jerkily-scrolling pitch. The sound, too, is nothing to write home about — the crowd seems to be watching a different match altogether, cheering and roaring at totally inappropriate times.

You could probably live with all this if Kick Off 3 played a good game of football but it doesn't. At best, it's okay-ish — and I stress, okay-ish — but too much of the time you don't really feel that you've got any control over the ball and where it's heading.

True, FIFA Soccer suffers from slightly similar gameplay problems (although not to such a great degree), but at least that game generated a sense of excitement and the odd surge of adrenalin. All Kick Off 3 generates are shrugs of complete indifference. Avoid.

KICK OFF 3

ANCO/IN-HOUSE

(0322) 292518

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 4Mb of hard disk space and joystick.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Makes you *really* appreciate FIFA International Soccer!
- Plays an 'okay' game of football.

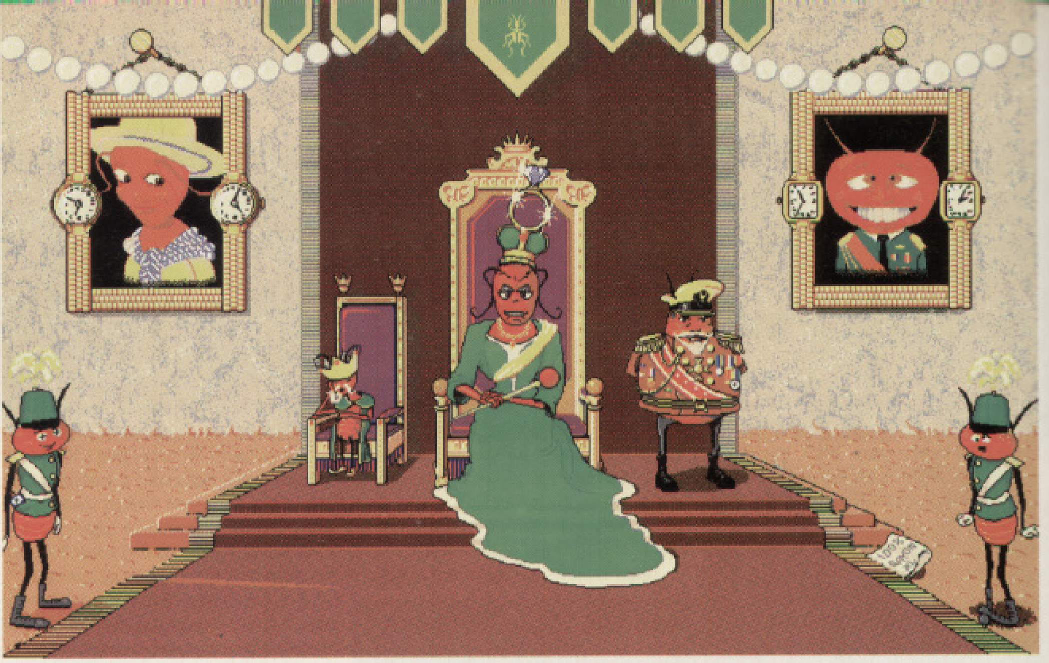
...AND THE BAD

- Everything just feels clumsy and you're never able to put together any satisfying or fluid football.
- No sense of atmosphere.
- The graphics are pretty awful.

Overall

33%

Alex Fraser turns his WASPish wit to Sierra's strategy ANTics. What will BEE the verdict?



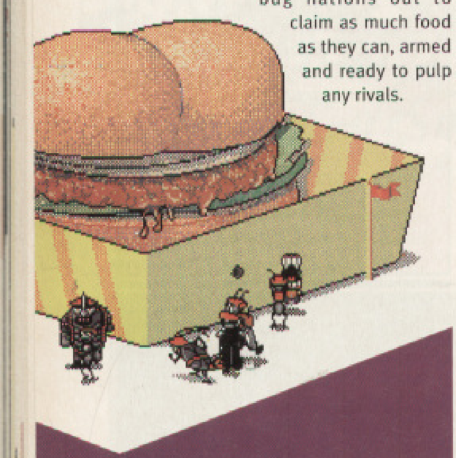
Battle Bugs

I'll tell you what; if there's one thing I don't like, it's creepy-crawlies, especially the dangerous ones with big mandibles and stingers. And I'll tell you something else, if there's another thing I don't much care for, it's strategy games.

So when David asked me to review this strategy game starring armies of dangerous creepy-crawlies it seemed reasonable to conclude that I'd drawn The Reviewer's Short Straw. Mind you, I'm always jumping to that conclusion and I usually end up surprised.

So now that the first paragraph has set up the tension ("Oh no! Will he really have drawn The Reviewer's Short Straw or will it turn out that he's jumped to the wrong conclusion — tsk! — *again*?" — Reader's Voice), here's the review.

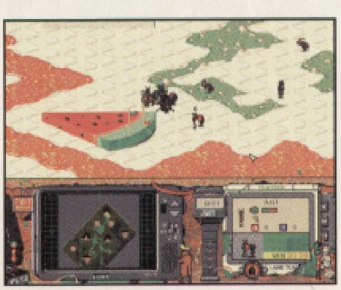
Battle Bugs is set in that Tom & Jerry world where armies of insects pilfer sandwiches, cakes and slices of pimento loaf from the picnic blankets and refrigerators of hapless humans. This game isn't a humans-versus-nature fight, though, because there are two hungry bug nations out to claim as much food as they can, armed and ready to pulp any rivals.



There are fifty battle scenarios, and in each one you're given a force of up to about a dozen insects with the objective of either obliterating all enemy forces or capturing a quota of foodstuff targets. In Battle Bugs the tanks, bombers and infantry you get in other strategy games are replaced by 22 varied types of insect, each of which has its own peculiarities and characteristics.

For example, wasps, bees and mosquitos can attack from the air. Ants and pill bugs can throw bombs and fire rockets. Fleas are fast but weak, rhinoceros beetles are slow but strong. Spiders are exceptional attackers and cockroaches are better defenders.

The squads are all fixed, so you always get the same set-up of, say, six spiders, three bees and a cockroach when you start a particular battle. Success therefore demands you come up with a strategy for putting your different resources to the best use — rather like Lemmings actually.



"There's antennae everywhere!" Battles can easily devolve into mass barneys like this one, but sometimes that's the way to win.

How about sending your cockroach up to the front line first so that the enemy can all home in on him and jump him? Then send in a squadron of bees and bomb the bad guys while they're all clustered together. Follow that up with a final charge by the spiders who can mop up the weakened survivors.

There are usually only a couple winning strategies for each scenario, and it usually takes numerous attempts before you're left with the last bug standing. Battles are fought in real time, so there are no 'rounds'. However, you can pause the action at any point to issue commands to your troops.

Click on a bug (or click and drag around a few bugs if you want them all to do the same thing) and a palette of nine command icons appears, some of which may be blank depending on the bug's abilities. You can send a bug to a point by a direct route or by a route which you draw on the battlefield, which is useful if there's a slick of treacle in the way. You can order it to use a weapon, send it to seek and destroy a particular enemy or set a perimeter inside which any enemy will be attacked.

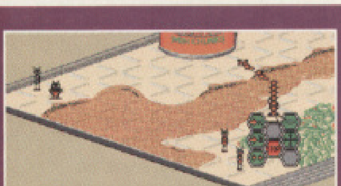
Whenever a fight breaks out between two bugs, it's to the death. The fundamental combat tactic in Battle Bugs is to use the stronger defenders on the field to start the fights, then while they're keeping the enemy occupied and taking the hits, move in with a strong attacker who can land blows without retaliation. The thing is, you need to ensure that your defenders are dispatched early on, so that they can get to the target first and can start the fight.

For example, say you've got an enemy praying mantis coming up the field to capture your slice of pizza. In his way there's your cockroach (slow mover, good defender, poor attacker) and your grasshopper (very fast mover, poor defender, good attacker). What you've got to do is send the cockroach out first to meet him, then as soon as he's started the fight, get the grasshopper to attack. While the mantis is fighting the cockroach he can't attack the grasshopper and can't defend against the grasshopper's strong attacking moves. Consequently he's easy meat.

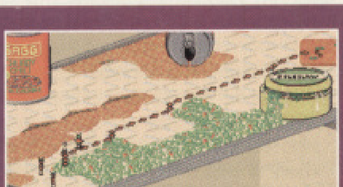
If, on the other hand, you'd sent the cockroach and the grasshopper into battle at the same time, the grasshopper

SLAWGGING *ALONG*

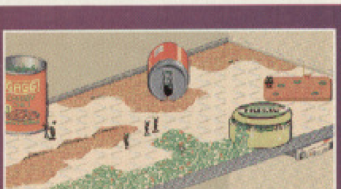
Here's a crawl-through of one of the easier levels. The objective is for your gang of three ants and a water bug to beat the enemy bee and ant to a slice of pimento loaf at the far end of the battle field. The bee will fly to the target, so the faster ants have to head straight there to get him before he can run his flag up. The water bug is too slow to follow, but he can help by stalling the enemy ant, giving our guys time to kill off the bee.



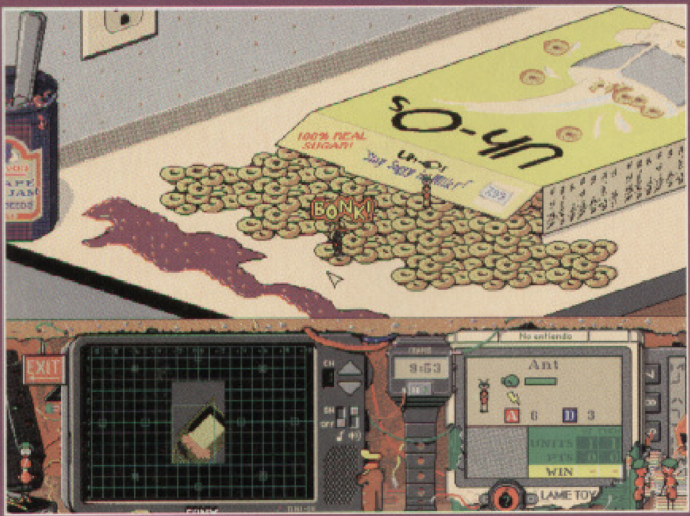
The water bug is slow on land but fast on water. By sending him to this position he can intercept the enemy ant.



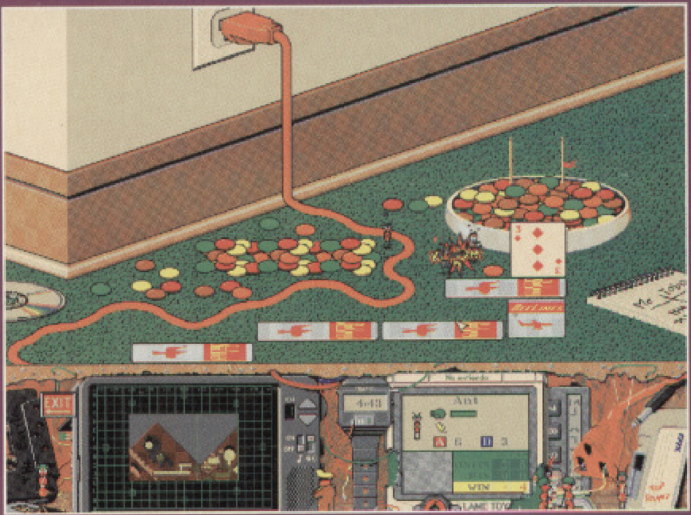
The coleslaw slows the ants down, so they have to be guided around it if they're to reach the pimento loaf in time.



The ants are halfway up the field, but the bee is already running up his flag! Luckily, the water bug has managed to jump the ant.



Ants can also lob rocks, but for maximum damage they need to drop them from a height.



A bomb-hurling ant unloads his deadly cargo on an grasshopper and mantis.

would have got there way ahead of the roach, started the fight and had the grasshopper dung kicked out of him by the time the roach arrived. I hope you're following all this. The point is, timing is of absolute importance, and in the end this is where the game goes wrong.

The early battles, in which I had small squads doing battle over two-screen wide battlefields, are easy enough to cope with. But by the time I got to the four-screen-high arenas, with attackers coming from several directions and ten or more bugs to control, my brain started to fuse. With that much going on all at once, it's very hard to keep a handle on the battle.

Timing attacks just right is very difficult, sometimes because when you send bugs out in good time to reach their target they get waylaid into a fight that you couldn't foresee, or they're slowed down by a puddle of jam that you didn't spot, or they just can't get through a gap because there's suddenly a gang of fighting insects blocking it up.

Checking on the progress of fights, seeing who's involved in them and who's winning, is also difficult because the fighting characters are so small and so densely packed (especially if you're playing in 800x600 SVGA mode) that you often can't click on individuals. This turns out to be a really irksome flaw.

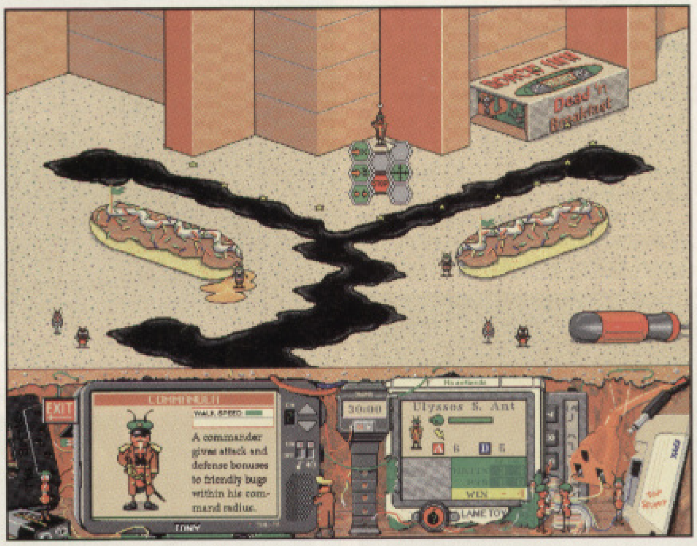
Sometimes coming up with a winning strategy is tough and sometimes it's not, but even when you know how to beat the opposition victory often seems to be as much by luck as by judgement.

After three failed attempts at a level you get the option to skip it and move on to the next, which is fortunate as it saved me from buying a rifle and slaughtering the population of EMAP Towers, but surely that sort of cheating is contrary to the spirit of the game?

Battle Bugs is a good idea that's humorously presented, but it's over-difficult and frustrating to play. I did enjoy the first dozen levels or so, but as the scenarios become more complicated it's too easy to lose control of the course of the battle, and then to lose control of your temper. Perhaps for the sake of your neighbours it's best to play it safe and stick to Doom.

It's a bit like...

The reliance on reactions and putting the insects' different abilities to proper use to 'solve' each scenario makes playing Battle Bugs much like playing Lemmings. Actually it's rather more complicated than the original Lemmings so perhaps it's better compared with Lemmings 2: The Tribes, which featured Lemmings with a wide variety of skills and abilities. And, like Battle Bugs, it also got a little too over-complex in places.


A commander gives attack and defense bonuses to friendly bugs within his command radius.
Ulysses S. Ant

Generals have an inspiring effect on your forces. Any bug within the circle of stars has two points added to their attack and defence scores.

BATTLE BUGS

SIERRA/DYNAMIX

(0734) 303322

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 8.5Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Adlib, Tandy Sensation and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

THE GOOD...

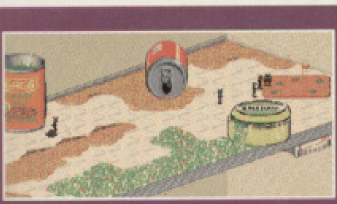
- An admirable and unusual idea that's nicely presented.
- The first few levels are lots of fun.

...AND THE BAD

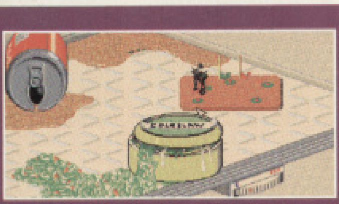
- Success depends too much on incredibly precise timing.
- Tiny graphics mean it can be hard to see who's who in a punch-up.
- Later levels are nigh-on impossible.
- SVGA graphics are eye-straining.

Overall

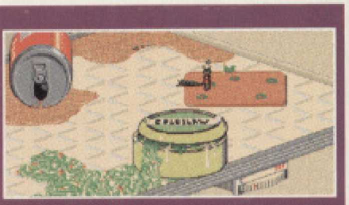
69%



Water bug cops it, but he didn't die in vain. By the time the ant gets to the target the bee should be dead.



The ant arrives just as the bee bites the dust. Our two remaining anty-heroes initiate the final chinning.



We win! Another victory for ant-kind, but let us mourn Ant 1 and Water Bug — "We shall never forget."

Wing Armada

Again the lantern-jawed humans clash with those big, hairy cats. Dean Evans was close by to watch the fly-past of Origin's new Wing Armada.

More than just Privateer with bells on, Wing Armada is the latest instalment in Origin's hugely successful Wing Commander series. It's a half-way game, a transitional stage between the old, bitmapped Wing Commander 2 engine and the all-singing, all-dancing, texture-mapped polygons that form the basis of the 3D routines for Wing Commander 3.

In fact, compared to Privateer, Wing Armada doesn't just have bells on, it has whistles, flutes and probably triangles as well. It seems that Origin has listened closely to its critics, and with ten shiny new starfighters to fly, Wing Armada lets you blow up Kilrathi (or Terrans for that matter), dogfight endless waves of computer-controlled enemies and, best of all, duel a friend over a network, modem or even on the same PC.

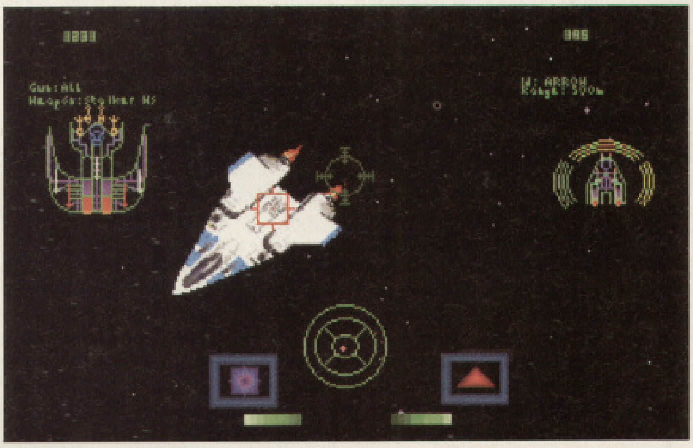
In fact, Wing Armada offers the player no less than three different modes of gameplay. The first of these, the Battle mode, is an instant action option where pilots are launched straight into space to fly the Gauntlet, an arcade dogfighting section where the fledgling Wing Commander gets to test his skills by dispatching wave after wave of persistent enemy fighters.

It's very basic, one-on-one stuff and while the Battle mode doesn't offer the player anything more than Wing Commander Academy offered before it, it does allow two players to fight against each other head-to-head or to team up into a squadron to destroy the enemy between them.

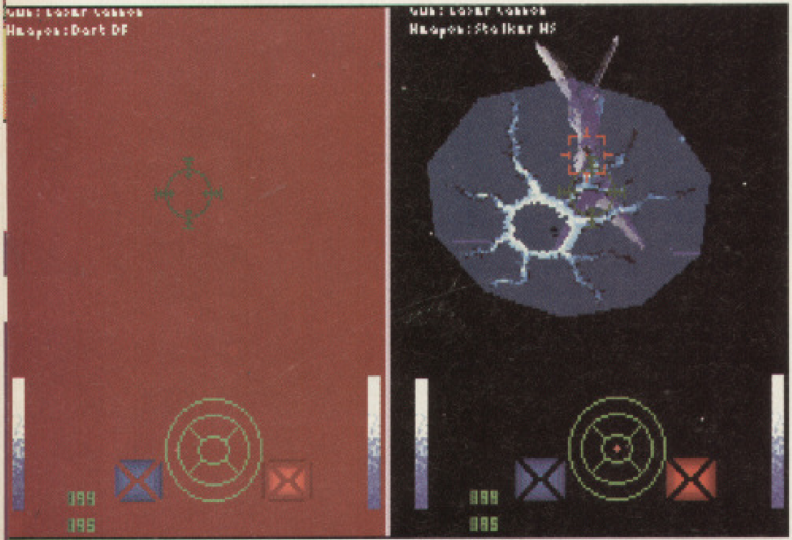
But whether you play in split-screen or via network or over a modem, the appeal of the Battle option is limited. It reduces the Wing Commander ideal down to a basic 3D shoot 'em up and if you're looking for a comparison, it's very similar to Mindscape's Evasive Action in terms of action and depth of gameplay.

If you're familiar with any of the Wing Commander games (including Privateer) then the space combat in Wing Armada will be instantly recognisable. Apart from the usual starfighter options like gun selection, missile selection, afterburners and the ability to send insults to your enemies, all the ships now have full 3D shields and if you press the F1 key, the confining cockpit view is neatly replaced with Origin's new 'invisible cockpit', which provides a clear, uninterrupted view of space. It also makes combat a damned sight easier to follow.

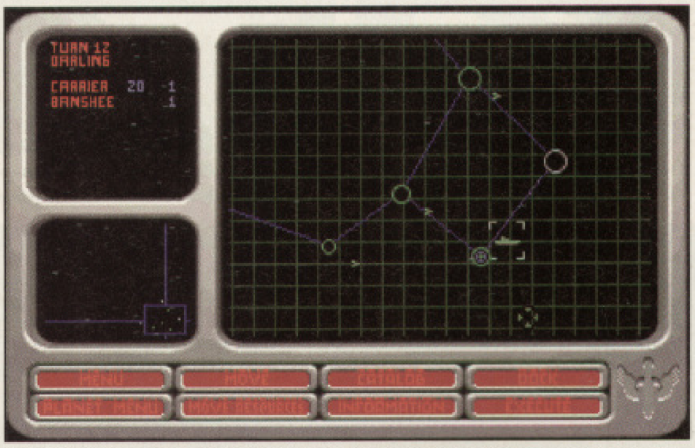
Speaking of combat, it doesn't appear to have changed much from the earlier Wing Commander games. Unlike the smooth-flowing TIE Fighter or Inferno, the craft that you pilot in Wing Armada have all the manoeuvrability of a cow stuck in a lift and most of the actual



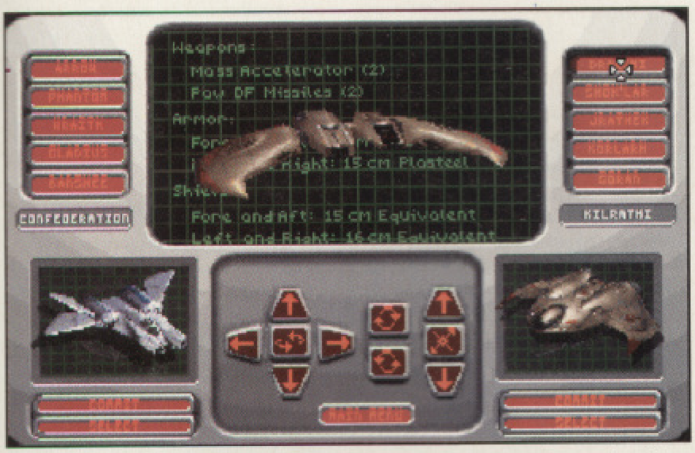
Press the F1 key and — hey presto! — the cockpit disappears. With the 'invisible cockpit', all the relevent data is projected onto the HUD, so you don't really need the cockpit layout at all.



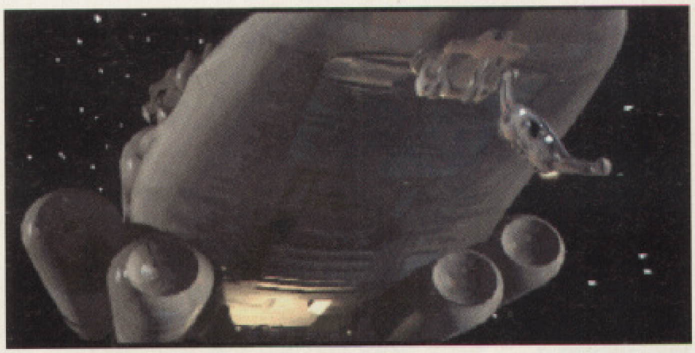
Dogfighting a Confed Wraith in the split-screen mode not only shows off one of the impressive multiplayer facilities but also illustrates that 3D shield effect that Origin is quite proud of.



In the campaign mode, this uninspiring screen is where you spend most of your time between engagements. While the carrier guards the home planet, scout ships search for the enemy...



In a two-player, head-to-head game, Wing Armada gives you the option to choose what ship to fly. There are ten new starfighters to choose from — five Kilrathi and five Confederation.



Like most games that bolt from the Origin stable, Wing Armada has a very nice, if very short, animated intro sequence. Okay, it's nothing really special but at least Origin made an effort.

fighting, especially when you're flying against the computer-controlled enemies, tends to degenerate into a series of head-on 'chicken' runs.

But, as I've mentioned, Wing Armada isn't just about deep-space dogfighting and it really comes into its own when it's played as a strategic and tactical wargame, especially in the Armada and Campaign options.

The Armada mode challenges the player to command a space carrier and to juggle natural resources in an attempt to dominate an entire space sector. You are the commander of the fleet (well, three ships actually), responsible for coordinating a momentous and crushing strike against the Empire of Kilrah or, if you choose to fight for the furballs, an attack against the heart of the Confederation itself.

If you choose to play the humans, you begin the campaign with a single carrier and two fragile Arrow starfighters. The idea is to force the enemy carrier (lurking undetected somewhere on the star map) out of the sector by defeating its fighters, destroying its bases and making best use of your resources produced from your own mining and manufacturing operations.

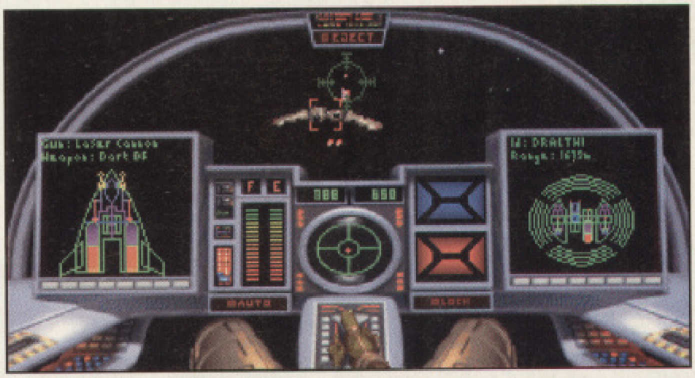
At each new planet, you can build three types of base. Firstly, the mines are essential because they produce resources necessary to construct new starfighters, new shipyards and fortresses; the shipyards can be ordered to bolt together any of the five available fighters; and finally, the fortresses can be built to protect strategically important planets from enemy attack.

It might sound quite complicated, but it's extremely easy to pick up and get used to. For example, at the start of the game your carrier only has a limited number of resources, 20 tons to be exact, and so to increase them you need to establish a mine on your home planet.

Opening a mine uses 10 tons of your resources, but once operational the output can be as high as 10 tons per turn. Once a mine has been established, you can then use some of the raw materials it produces to build bigger, better starfighters which can, in turn, be sent out on patrol or docked onto the carrier for defensive purposes.

Both the Armada and the more complex Campaign option operate on a turn-based system and while your actions mostly consist of moving ships from A to B and establishing bases, when a Confederation craft encounters a Kilrathi, Wing Armada either calculates the result automatically or allows you to play out the confrontation in fully texture-mapped, Gouraud-shaded 3D. Naturally, if you win enough battles, or find and destroy the enemy carrier, you win not only the sector, but the entire game as well.

After the disappointment of Privateer and Pacific Strike, it's good to see that with Wing Armada, Origin is finally returning to something resembling its earlier form. Although the game doesn't do anything radically new, the texture-mapped polygons are light years ahead of the old 2D bitmaps and the design of the campaigns — and I say this especially with the multiplayer facility in mind — is worthy of a quick round of applause.



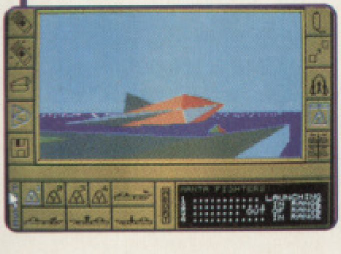
Wing Commander veterans will find that combat is pretty much the same in Wing Armada. Let's play 'chicken' shall we?

Simply put, Wing Armada is a multiplayer Wing Commander without the talkie bits and it's as a *multiplayer* game that I've chosen to judge it. When you fly against the computer in Armada, the action often feels a little flat and lacklustre. There's no real excitement or urgency. But if you fight against a human opponent, someone with a little flair and unpredictability, Wing Armada is exciting, tense and great fun to play. Okay, so the combat engine still needs a little polishing but, on the whole, Wing Armada is the game I desperately hoped that it would be.

Nice one Origin.

It's a bit like...

... Carrier Command, which is absolutely ancient by toady's standards. In Carrier Command, you commanded a huge, automated aircraft carrier and had simply to search out and destroy the enemy's huge, automated aircraft carrier. I say simply, but you also had to manage an elaborate supply line, attack enemy bases and equip your force of Manta aircraft and amphibious tanks with missiles, bombs and fuel. It sounds uncannily like Wing Armada doesn't it?



Are **you** talking to **me?**

Like all Wing Commander games, Wing Armada features the ability to send insults to your opponent as you do battle. You can store four 'taunts' for use in any game, and if you have a soundcard that comes with recording software and a microphone you can even create your own.

Wing Armada includes a program called WAV2TNT that converts any ordinary PC .WAV file into a .TNT file that the Wing Armada game can use. So, for example, if you plunder your .WAV library like I did you can shout 'Terminated' at your enemies as they explode or confuse their attack runs with a well-timed 'ah, I see you have the machine that goes ping!' from Monty Python. Silly, but fun.

WING COMMANDER ARMADA

Electronic Arts/Origin

(0753) 549442

£39.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 15Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, General MIDI; keyboard

THE GOOD...

- Great new graphics. A massive improvement on the old 2D bitmaps of Wing Commander 2.
- The Armada and Campaign options are very absorbing, especially in the multiplayer modes.
- Not just split-screen, but network, modem and serial cable options. A round of applause for Origin at last...

...AND THE BAD

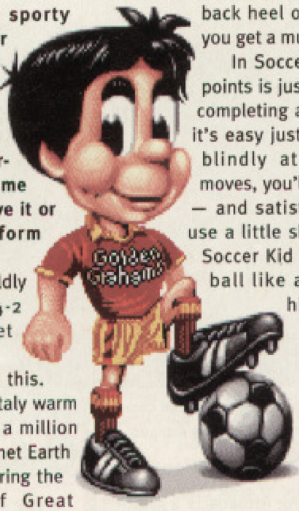
- the graphics have been updated but the enemy AI hasn't. They're still completely inept.
- Combat against the computer boils down little more than an endless series of 'chicken-run' passes.

Overall

84%

Soccer Kid

He's a kid, he plays soccer and he leaps ledges. Dean Evans shouts "Ooh-ahh" at the new platform game from Krisalis.



Despite its sporty title, Soccer Kid isn't really about football at all — not in the sense that 'football' involves 22 players, two goals, dubious refereeing decisions and half-time oranges, anyway. No, believe it or not, Soccer Kid is a platform game.

There are no goals, no wildly cheering crowds and a 4-4-2 formation isn't going to get you anywhere.

Confused? Well, imagine this. It's 1994 and, as Brazil and Italy warm up for the World Cup final, a million miles away from little ol' planet Earth the alien pirate Scab is scouring the galaxy for a trophy of Great Importance to add to his renowned 'Trophies of Great Importance' collection.

Spotting the glittering World Cup trophy on his long-range scanner, Scab immediately zaps down to the Pasadena Rose Bowl and steals it. However, while the theft is a resounding success, in his rush to escape he carelessly slams his fragile spacecraft into a passing asteroid and the cup shatters into five pieces, each fragment landing on a different part of the globe. It's up to Soccer Kid to cash in his dad's airmiles, jet around the world and retrieve the bits.

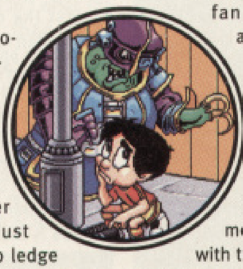
It's no small task either. There are five platform-filled countries to be negotiated — England, Italy, Russia, Japan and America, to be precise — and each of these consist of three individual sub-levels plus a bonus game. To qualify for the bonus game, where Soccer Kid gets the chance to snatch a piece of the World Cup back, 11 spinning football cards must be collected on each level.

So far it's fairly formulaic stuff and it's no surprise that, like most platform games, Soccer Kid involves a lot of leaping, jumping and grabbing of flashing bonus fruits. But things are made even more difficult with the addition of pits, moving platforms and spikes, as well as a host of bad guys that you must avoid including straw-chewing farmers, American footballers and the odd fat, bearded opera singer.

And the tenous soccer link? Well, if you haven't already noticed, Soccer Kid runs around the globe with his trusty football. Whereas Zool has a sword and Cool Spot has his spinning balls of fizziness, Soccer Kid's only defence is his skill with a black and white pig's stomach, filled with air.

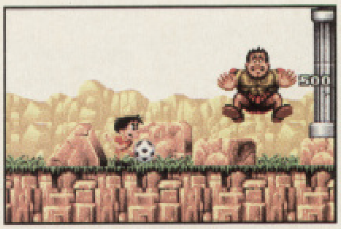
Using the ball as a weapon, Soccer Kid can kill enemies and collect bonus items that would otherwise be well out of his reach. It's far from being just a fancy gimmick too — the more difficult the shot you perform, the more points you get for it. For example, you can easily zap a psychotic skateboarder with a straightforward kick, but if you elect to get him with an overhead kick, a back heel or even a header, you get a much higher bonus.

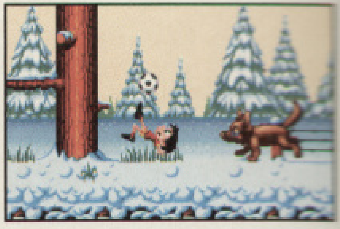
In Soccer Kid racking up points is just as important as completing a level, and while it's easy just to hoof the ball blindly at anything that moves, you'll get more points — and satisfaction — if you use a little skill and thought. Soccer Kid can also use the ball like a spring to leap higher and when it's kicked at bonus chests dotted about the sub-levels, power-ups like Extra Time, Invincibility and Extra Lives can be collected.



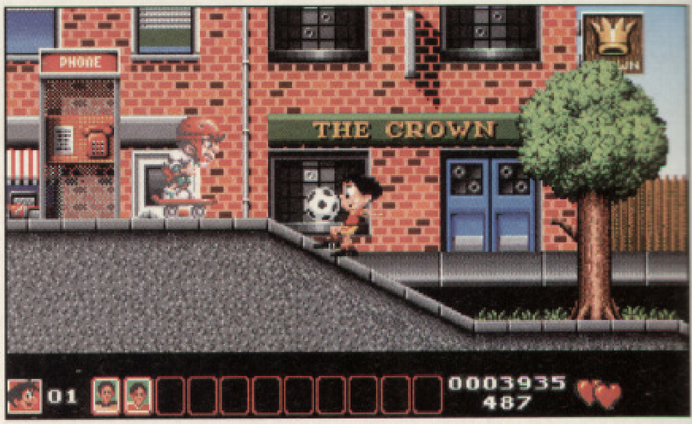
And that, platform people, is Soccer Kid in a nutshell. Thanks to the addition of the football element, the tired old platform game has been force-fed a brand new twist. As a result, Soccer Kid is much more than just another fast, run-'n'-jump ledge leaper. In fact, it's better than Cool Spot and definitely more fun to play than Zool — it's without a doubt the slickest, most playable platformer I've seen so far this month.

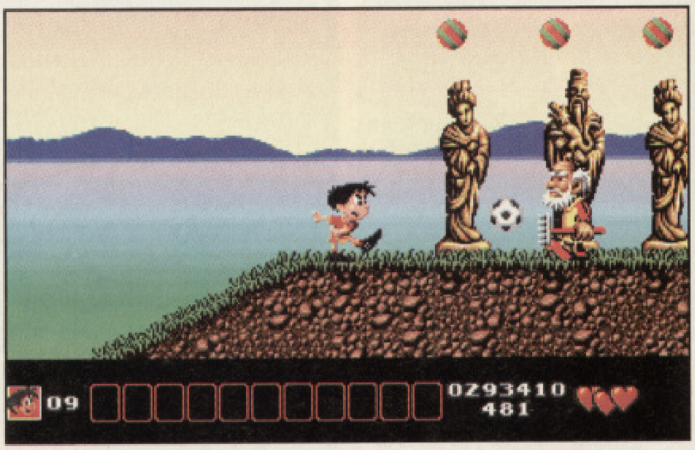
Now, I'm not necessarily a great fan of platform games, although I've put in a fair few hours on Sonic the Hedgehog and when I was a wee lad I played Jet Set Willy and Chuckie Egg for weeks on end. But I like this game and I heartily recommend that, if you're fed up with the usual crop of dull, uninspired platform games, you try Soccer Kid for size. You might be pleasantly surprised — I know I was.





(Above left) Our platform hero attacks Roman Centurions as he battles his way across Italy.
(Above right) Acrobatic bicycle kicks take a bit of skill but they're worth more points.
(Below) Soccer Kid plays a home fixture outside the local boozer. Over here son, on me head...





Using all his footballing skills, Soccer Kid must run, jump and kick his way across five different countries. In Japan, 11 football cards must be collected before your health runs out...

SOCCER KID

KRISALIS/IN-HOUSE

(0709) 372290

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA and 13Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- The football theme adds a refreshing new twist to an ailing, uninspired genre.
- You don't need the reflexes of a hyperactive 10-year-old to be able to perform bicycle kicks, sliding tackles and headers.
- The game has a punchy, highly atmospheric soundtrack.

...AND THE BAD

- Unlike the original Amiga version, the PC incarnation has no parallax scrolly backgrounds.

Overall

85%

Get it while it's hot!

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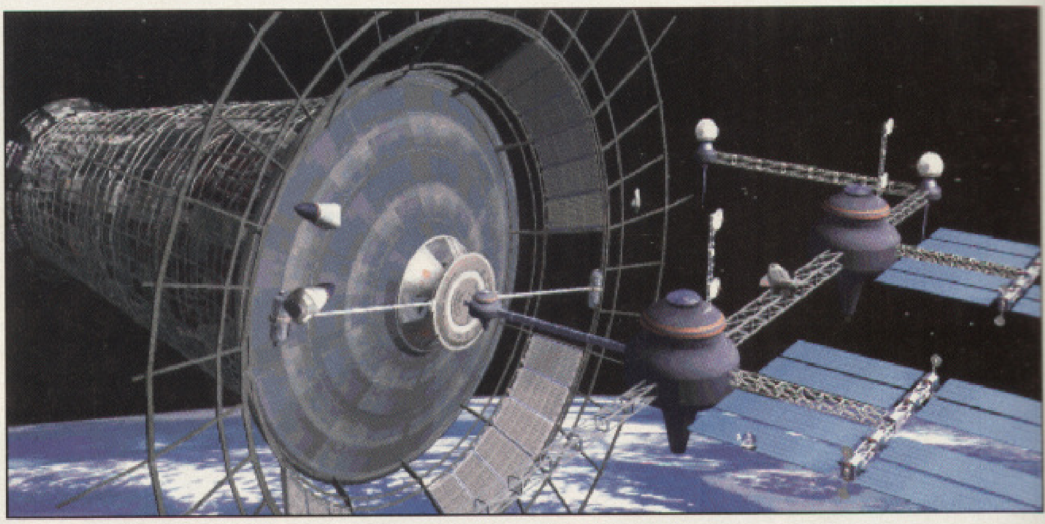
Outpost CD

It's bye-bye to the human race as Dean Evans commands the last bastion of mankind in Sierra's Outpost.



It is the 21st Century. On a Tuesday. Round about 8.23pm. "You must decide," burbles the female Artificial Intelligence, "how many people you wish to save and what supplies you will need to support them. Any mistake at this point will doom both you and your colonists to certain death. Have a nice day..."

With scientific complexity, beautifully-rendered graphics and a tiled-map, city-building bit, Sierra's flagship CD title, Outpost, is a realistic simulation of what NASA scientists believe it will be like to establish a self-contained colony on a hostile planetary surface.

Unlike games such as Inferno and TIE Fighter, spaceflight in Outpost is cold, computed and accurate. There is no romance, there are no remote starbases carved into asteroids and there are no epic battles between huge Star Cruisers piloted by giant, talking prawns. You see, while other space-orientated games have their hyperdrives, betentacled aliens and Jedi lightsabres, everything in Outpost is based on current scientific theory.

Okay, it might sound a tad dull, but in Outpost space is taken very seriously. Most, if not all, of the science is based on NASA research, and although some of the future technology has been 'assumed' to jack up the interest and enhance the gameplay — like terraforming and nanotechnology, for example — if you want a strategy game that doesn't ignore the laws of physics and one where you have to juggle weight ratios, mine minerals and manage meagre resources, Outpost is about as complex and authentic a space exploration game as you're likely to get.

But why exactly are you fleeing the Earth in a small starship with 200 colonists and a couple of inflatable tents? Well, it appears that the main reason is massively big, immensely rocky and tumbling silently on a catastrophic collision course with the planet Earth. The reason is a bloody great asteroid.

Let me explain. Anyone remember the old science fiction flick, Meteor? It was a tense movie, where a collection of renowned actors huddled in an underground bunker and fired the world's nuclear arsenal at a huge chunk of rock that was heading straight for the Earth. Sean Connery was in it. So was Brian Keith, apparently. Anyway, the plan succeeds, the world is saved and there is much spontaneous hugging and joyful kissing between the renowned and huddled actors.

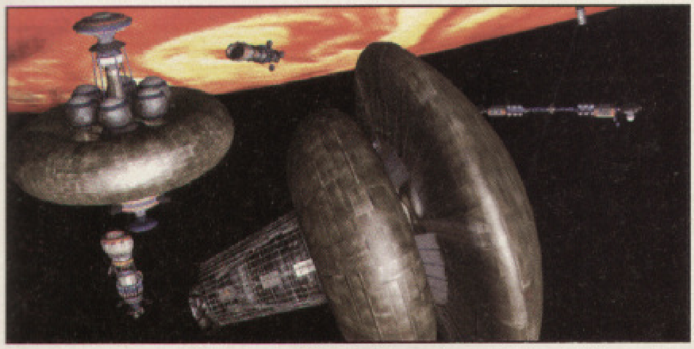
This also happens in Outpost, bar the hugging and kissing bit. Here too the Earth is threatened by a big asteroid — called Vulcan's Hammer — and computer simulations calculate that it will hit the Earth and cause billions of megatons worth of damage. And as in Meteor, eminent scientists huddle in underground bunkers to supervise the firing of a powerful warhead which, it is hoped, will jolt the asteroid onto a different trajectory and avert the danger.

Unfortunately, the plan fails. Instead of nudging or destroying the offending asteroid, the explosion splits it into two big pieces, both of which — six months later — happily plough into the Earth with the force of a large juggernaut running over an orange.

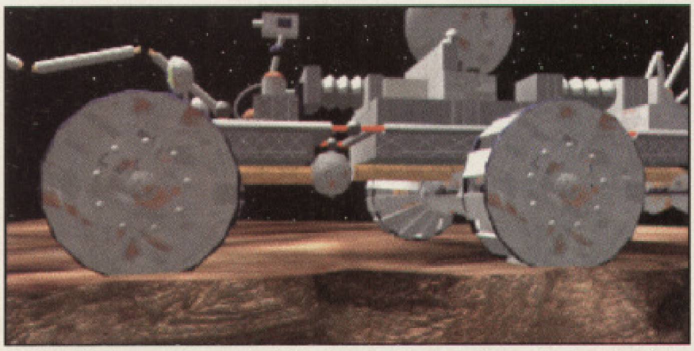
But all is not lost, however, because a multi-billion dollar corporation has been hastily constructing a huge starship and, while the population of Earth runs around screaming in panic, you and a bunch of carefully-selected colonists are preparing to escape.

While probes wing their way through the void to gather data on distant star systems, you must first equip the mothership, deciding how many colonists you want to take on the flight and packing enough food to last them until you have built your first agricultural dome. It also helps if you have enough Landers to transport your colonists to their new home's surface, and in the same way it's no good packing all manner of high-tech equipment if you don't have sufficient Cargo Landers to carry it down.

Once you've decided on the number of colonists you're going to take — and



After being hastily assembled in Earth orbit (far left) your giant starship is refuelled at an Esso service station hanging above Jupiter. Fill her up please, and don't forget the free glasses...



Pretty SVGA cutscenes often punctuate the colony-building bit and here one of my colony's Explorer robots trundles happily along a clifftop. Two seconds later it plunges into a ravine.

you can take up to 200 — you've then got to carefully balance the rest of your cargo to give you the best chance of survival. The spacecraft can only hold so much. Do you take an extra unit of food? What about a weather satellite or Orbital Platform? Do you take a Tokamak reactor or build one when you get to your final destination?

Whatever you decide, after you've suitably equipped your fragile space-ark, the probe data can then be accessed. By carefully studying the 'habitable planet probability' factor in the probe reports, you've got to choose a destination star and finally, once all the preparation and planning is complete, you can power up the engines and click on 'Go' to launch boldly where no man has gone before.

And it's all very pretty so far, too. Outpost has a *ten minute* intro sequence, where the plot — the bit about the asteroid — is slowly recounted with the aid of some stunning Super VGA animations and music from the Planets Suite.

The animations are very impressive and not only do they look fabulous, they're gorgeously rendered and highly atmospheric; the huge starship with its donut-shaped fuel tanks, satellites, the lonely refuelling station rotating slowly over the rim of Jupiter... If I had my way, I'd just shut up right now and splash 27 of them across these four pages.

But pretty though they undoubtedly are, these SVGA bits are cosmetic and really little more than glorified cutscenes. Underneath the flashy graphics, Outpost is actually a much simpler, less impressive-looking game. And to be honest, it looks and plays a lot like Sim City 2000.

In fact, at first glance, Outpost *is* Sim City 2000 in space. Once you've deployed any satellites that you brought along and launched your first Seed Factory, the pretty, rendered graphics disappear and the game jumps into a fairly uninspiring world-building section.

Like SC2000, the gameworld is drawn in a similar isometric-3D perspective and your fledgling colony must be managed like any Earth metropolis. As overall commander, your aim is not just to expand your exiled community, but also to make sure that your colonists are suitably employed, the planetary resources are mined and exploited and that there's enough food, the waste is recycled and everybody is happy.

Before any new buildings can be erected, the surrounding terrain must be bulldozed and then, providing you have sufficient raw materials to build, say, an Agricultural Dome, you simply click on the appropriate icon on the buildings menu and plonk it down on the map. In Outpost, buildings must be connected by air tubes which not only supply your installations with fresh oxygen, they also serve as a rudimentary transportation network.

Once your construction programme is under way and you've built CHAP facilities to provide air, Agri Domes to provide food, a power station, storage tanks and residential areas, the colonists will also start demanding better facilities. Like Sim City 2000, they'll lobby for hospitals, parks and even universities.

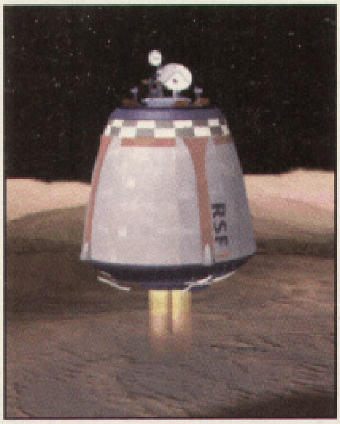
And, if Outpost is a bit like Sim City then there'll be a few space-type disasters in there as well right? Absolutely. Although the unseasoned colony commander won't have to suffer the inconvenience of earthquakes, floods or forest fires, there are still plagues and meteorite strikes to be tackled.

But despite the obvious similarities in the graphics and the gameplay, Outpost soon proves to be far more complicated than Sim City could ever be. It's not just a game you can sit down with and play after a few minutes and whereas Sim City is like a digital toy you can dabble with, Outpost is a complex, heavily strategic simulation. It's also not played in real-time; the game advances in a series of 'turns' which means you can take as long as you like to make a particular move.

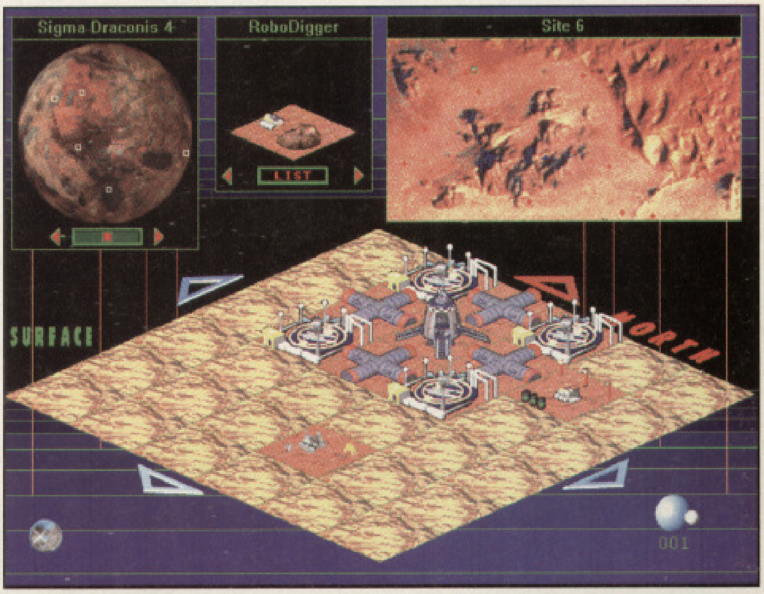
The primary aim of Outpost is to keep your colonists alive, and if you manage to survive an entire year without anybody popping their space-clogs, you've done very well indeed. In fact, soon after you've landed you start to rapidly run out of resources, and so one of your first priorities is to establish mines, smelters and factories so you can start generating your own.

Industries and technologies in Outpost are linked together in a complex and interlocking chain. For example, raw materials from the mines must be transported to smelters and then finally onto the factories. The workers must have enough food and air and any robots that are used must be maintained and sufficiently powered. Whereas in Sim City the buildings just required power, water and good transport links, in Outpost they must also have the right minerals, ores and complement of staff.

Research is important too. Although

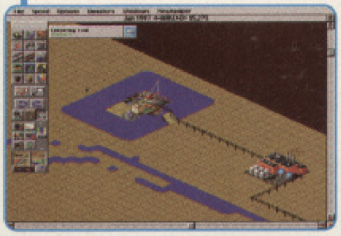


The Seed Factory (above) is the first ship to land on the surface. Outpost then switches to the tiled-map view (below) and a factory, smelter and control centre are constructed.



It's a bit like...

...Sim City 2000. If you liked Sim City but wished that it had a touch more depth to it, then Outpost should more than satisfy your strategic needs. Sim City, in comparison, is much simpler. Build up a thriving, throbbing metropolis with shops, houses, roads, railways, etc, and then protect it against earthquakes, riots and alien invasion. Run a community your way. The world — well, a large gridded square to be exact — is your oyster.



Going **underground**

Factory
Surface factories produce robots, road materials, fuel cells and spare parts for your installations.

DIRT Facility
The 24 hour-a-day, Disaster Instant Response Team minimises the damage from catastrophic space-type disasters.

Warehouse
Stores medicine, fuel cells, robots, etc.

Storage Tanks
The delivery point for processed resources.

Police
The presence of a police force reduces the crime rate and boosts morale in the colony.

Air Tubes
Connecting all your buildings with air tubes allows air, water and people to move freely around the colony.

Smelter/Ore Processor
This facility transforms the ore into processed resources that your fledgling colony needs to survive.

Agricultural Dome
The Agri Dome provides food for your colonists once your early supplies run out.

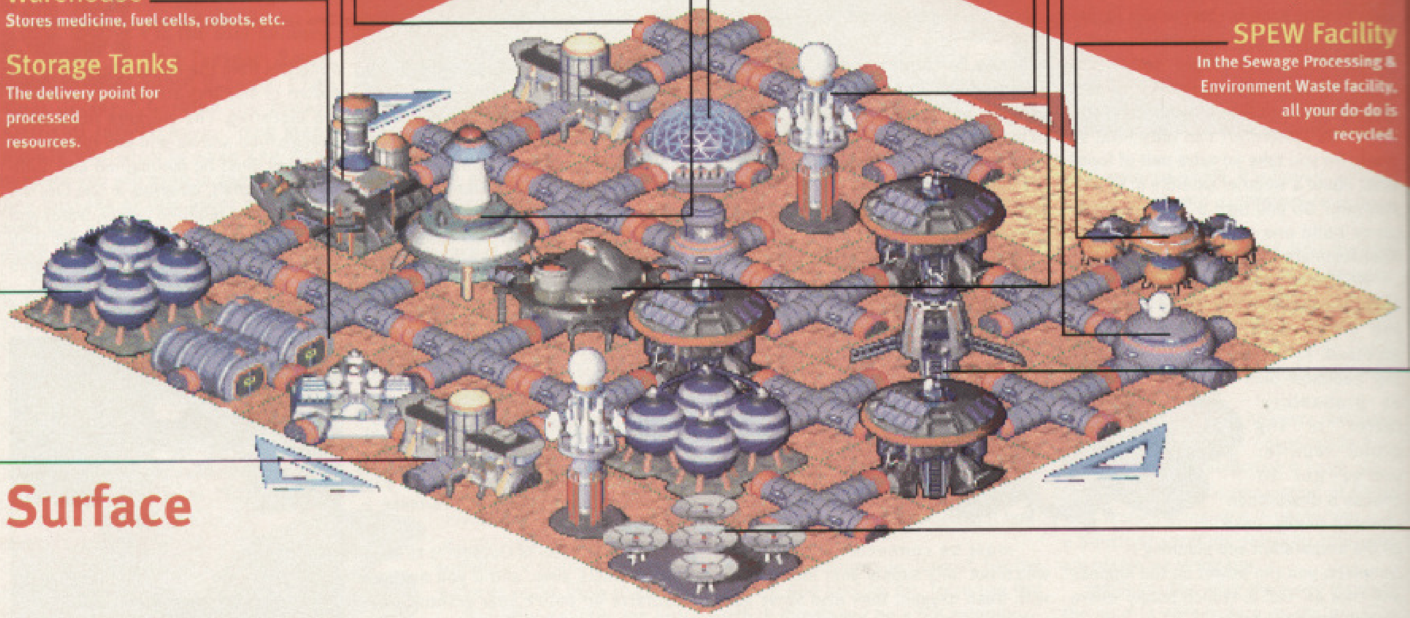
Communications Tower
The comms tower expands your colony communication network.

Solar Powersat Receiver
This receiver produces power from orbiting power satellites. Unfortunately, you've got to have two solar receivers to pump out the juice.

Command Centre
The command centre is a vital part of the colony because it's where you sit and plan your colony's future.

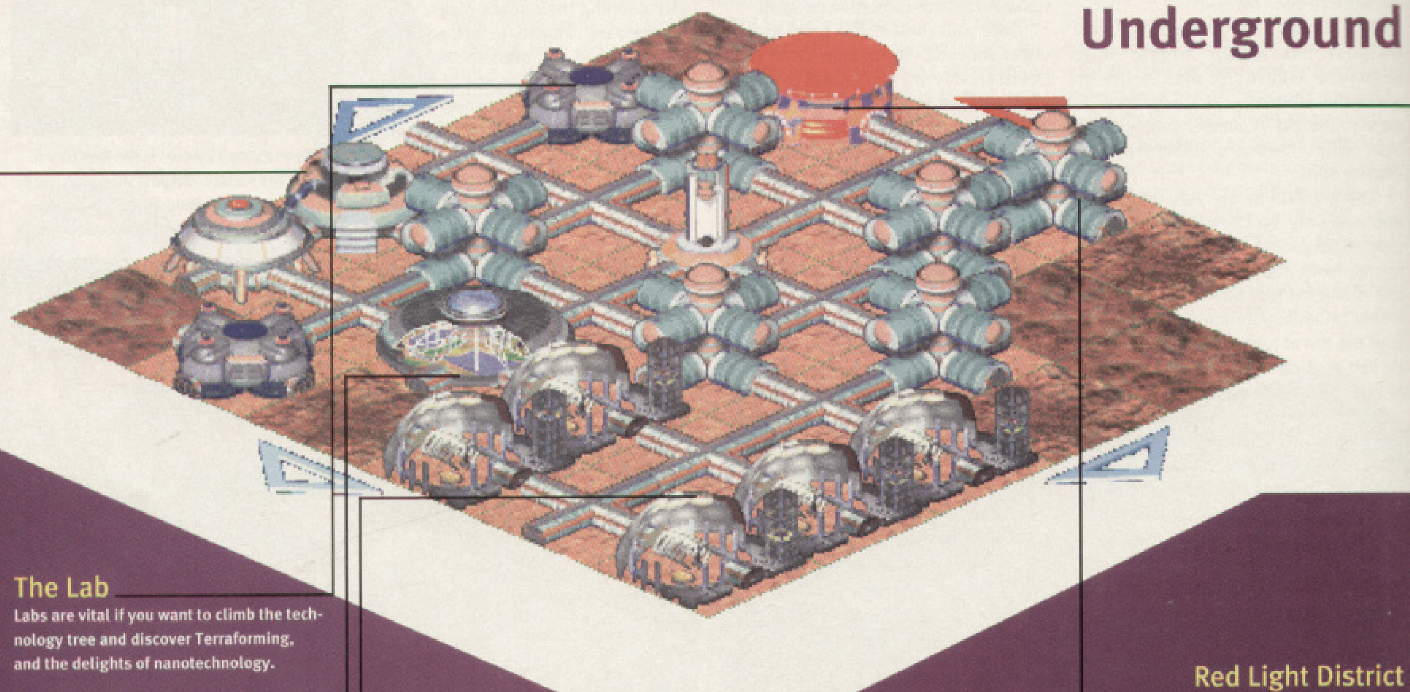
Seed Factory
The Seed Factory automatically disgorges robots on landing and builds your first vital colony installations.

SPEW Facility
In the Sewage Processing & Environment Waste facility, all your do-do is recycled.



Surface

Underground



The Lab
Labs are vital if you want to climb the technology tree and discover Terraforming, and the delights of nanotechnology.

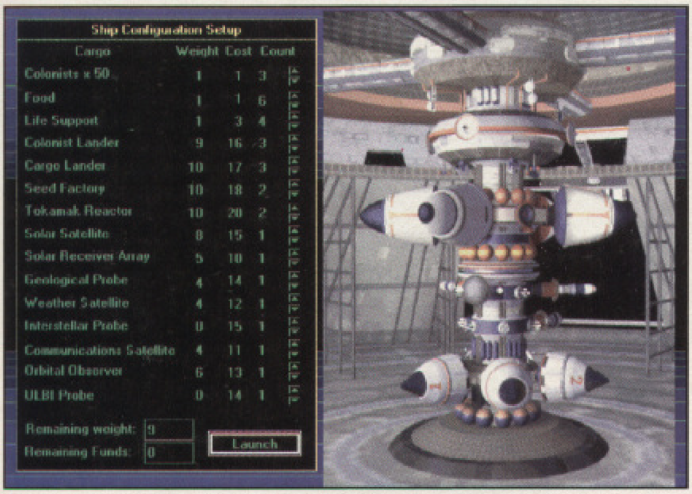
Medical Centre
It's a centre and it's got your medics in it.

Park & Reservoir
Recreation and relaxation is important, so where better than New Hyde Park?

The University
Sooner or later the kids are going to grow up and before they can be integrated into colony life, they must be educated here.

Red Light District
While having no vital role, the red light district does boost morale. Funny that.

Residential
Colonists have got to live somewhere and underground is the safest place for them.

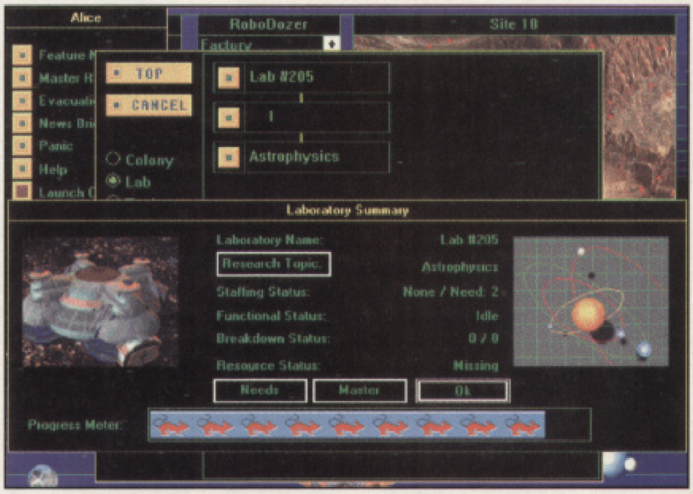


Ship Configuration Setup

Cargo	Weight	Cost	Count
Colonists x 50	1	1	3
Food	1	1	6
Life Support	1	3	4
Colonist Lander	9	16	3
Cargo Lander	10	17	3
Seed Factory	10	18	2
Tokamak Reactor	10	20	2
Solar Satellite	8	15	1
Solar Receiver Array	5	10	1
Geological Probe	4	14	1
Weather Satellite	4	12	1
Interstellar Probe	0	15	1
Communications Satellite	4	11	1
Orbital Observer	6	13	1
ULBI Probe	0	14	1

Remaining weight: 9
Remaining Funds: 0

One of the most important parts of Outpost involves deciding what supplies you're going to pack for your spaceflight. Obviously, any mistake at this point will doom you to certain death.



Laboratory Summary

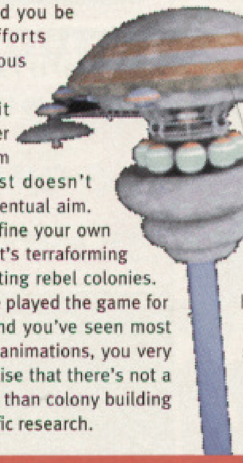
Laboratory Name: Lab #205
Research Topic: Astrophysics
Staffing Status: None / Need: 2
Functional Status: Idle
Breakdown Status: 0 / 0
Resource Status: Missing

While building factories and SPEWs may be fun for a while, your colony won't flourish if you don't research new technology. Naturally, the more labs you build, the more you can study.

you can keep your populace more than happy by churning out luxury items from your factories, channelling your resources into the Research and Development labs allows your colony to develop and to discover new technologies and vital new sciences.

But like MicroProse's Civilization, you can only build something once you've researched it. At the start you can only work on general projects like chemistry and physics, but as your knowledge increases you can study more advanced topics like robotics, nanotechnology and terraforming. Research too throws up its own particular set of problems. Do you replace your old factories with new ones? Is terraform research a good idea or should you be directing your efforts towards an ambitious space program?

Ultimately, it doesn't really matter because, like Sim City 2000, Outpost doesn't actually have an eventual aim. It's up to you to define your own end-goal, whether it's terraforming the planet or defeating rebel colonies. In fact, when you've played the game for a couple of days and you've seen most of the pretty SVGA animations, you very slowly begin to realise that there's not a lot more to Outpost than colony building and endless scientific research.



But you might not even get this far because the Outpost manual is woefully brief and often inaccurate. For example, features like trucks and monorails that are explained on page 48 don't even appear in the game and the complicated colony mechanics aren't explained clearly or in any real detail. It's outrageous that a game of this depth and complexity isn't better explained.

The game is also extremely slow. Obviously, it's running in 256-colour Super VGA under Windows and so it isn't going to win any awards for speed, but unless you've got a machine packing 8Mb of RAM you should be prepared to play Outpost with a good book close by, just so you've got something to do during the long wait between turns.

There is no question that Outpost is comprehensive, realistic and often thoroughly absorbing, but like Sim City, it's a game you'll either tinker with for months or get thoroughly bored with after a day and a half. And unless you're prepared to sit down for hours, lost in the complexities of mineral stores and smelter construction, Outpost is not the Sim-City-in-space you might think it is.

That's not to say it isn't very good. It's just that the gameplay can get very, very tedious — in fact, when I showed it to Dave he watched for a bit and then nipped off to watch some paint dry in the car park. And to be fair he has a point.

The reality of space is very dull. There are no hyperspace engines, no Dan Dare-style, skin-tight spacesuits and not a bug-eyed monster, green or otherwise, anywhere to be found. And this, I'm afraid to say, is also part of the problem.

You see, while Outpost may well be scientifically accurate, it isn't very exciting. Injecting realism into a computer game doesn't automatically make it very good — it just makes it very real. Look at Frontier; it features probably the most accurate simulation of fictional astrophysics and spaceflight ever seen in a game and, let's face it, it isn't much fun to play either.

So, although Sierra has undoubtedly got an excellent strategy game on its hands, Outpost is not the genre-shattering smash hit that perhaps it should have been. Of course, it's far too complicated to mention every feature of the game here but, suffice it to say, despite the badly written manual and the often dullish gameplay, with its mix of high resolution animations and resource management, Outpost is unlike anything you'll have played before.

If you're a strategy buff in search of the ultimate administrative challenge then Outpost is something you can learn, absorb and easily get lost in. But if you're just a Sim City 2000 veteran and you like the idea of Sim-City-in-space then be warned, because this game definitely isn't it. Outpost may look very pretty but it isn't a software toy. It's a strategic simulation of resource management. Come and play it if you think you're hard enough...

OUTPOST

SIERRA/IN-HOUSE

(0734) 303322

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 486, VGA/SVGA, 640K, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive, mouse and Windows 3.1.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Ad Lib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Despite being stuffed inside woefully small boxes, the SVGA animations are absolutely stunning.
- Underneath the flashy graphics there's an extremely complex and absorbing strategy game desperate to get out.

...AND THE BAD

- Like Sim City there's no defined end-goal and after a while the whole experience begins to pall.
- The manual gives you very little insight into the complexities of the game. In short, it's bloody useless.

Overall

82%

Did a **bit** fall off?

Remember I mentioned that the Outpost manual mentions trucks and monorails but they don't actually feature in the finished game?

Well, to fix the problem, Sierra will soon be offering a free Outpost upgrade that will include the missing roads and monorails, and add trade between colonies and a tutorial saved game to help you grasp the basics of colony macromanagement. There will also be a new 'Beginner' level, a reworking of the game's 'Easy' level and other miscellaneous game improvements.

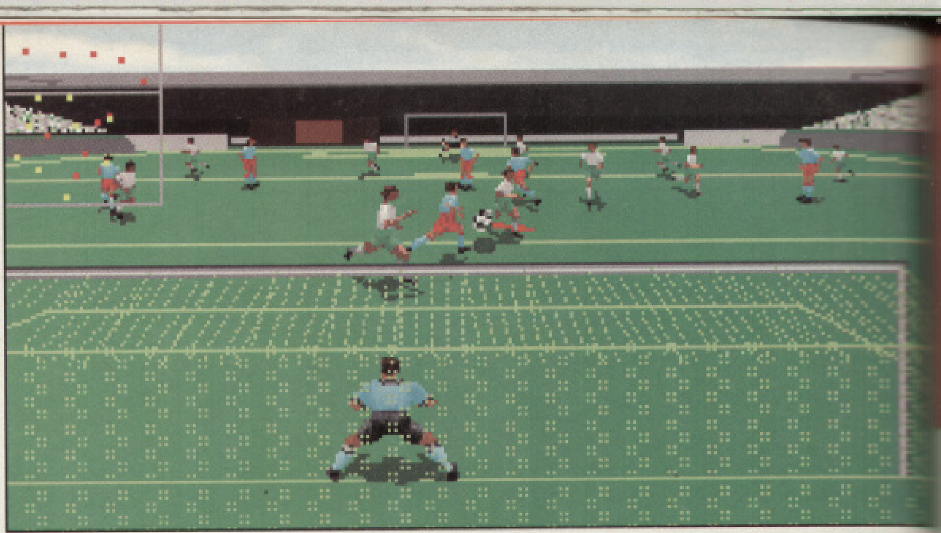
And it doesn't end there either. No fewer than three Outpost Expansion Modules are in the pipeline, the first of which is the Outpost Planet Pack, which increases the number of available star systems and planet types that you and your colonists can flee to.

Pack number two (proposed for 1995) will allow players to build their own planets from a library of terrain parts, while pack three (also proposed for 1995) will enable you to interact with alien races through space exploration, trade and/or specialised combat. How thrilling...

● For further information call Sierra UK on (0734) 303322.

David Upchurch laces up his Predators and plays Infogrames' World Cup footy tie-in.

Planet Football



(Above) If you're controlling the team playing 'out of the screen', you'll be lucky if you even get in *sight* of the opposition's net, let alone whack a ball into it. Strangely, the computer never seems to have similar troubles when it's in the same situation.

(Below right) These screens allow you change your chosen team's tactics, strategies and line-up, as well as inspect each player's fitness and ball skills.

Hearing the name 'Planet Football' you'd be forgiven for expecting some sort of weird fantasy soccer game featuring, say, the cream of Earth's talent battling it out with teams of aliens from Mars or Jupiter for the Intergalactic Cup, or giant aliens who actually use a real planet for the ball in their cosmic kick-abouts.

Okay, pretty crap ideas (they're bound to be – after all, it was me who had 'em), but even so I bet those games would have turned out to be a damn sight more interesting to play than the ho-hum World Cup fever bandwagon-jumper we've got on our hands here.

As you'd expect, Planet Football features all 24 World Cup qualifying teams, as well as six other "top-ranking" (to quote the blurb on the back of the box) teams like England, France, Australia... in fact, just about every country where the game might possibly be marketed but which didn't make it to the famous football tournament.

Planet Football allows you to play against either the computer or a friend in a one-off friendly or a complete World Cup championship. Before each match you can adjust the team's playing style, its formation and its line-up, and – of course – there are options to change the pitch conditions, whether it's windy or not, the length of each match, etc, etc.

So far, so good, if fairly unsurprising. However, once into the game proper, it doesn't take more than a few minutes of play for you to realise that Planet Football isn't going to be giving the boys at Sensible Software any sleepless nights.

You see, in Planet Football you view the action from a 3D-ish perspective, with a sort of 'floating camera' tracking the ball's movement and the players running 'in and out' of the screen. Thing is, while this makes the game *look* great – especially as the animation of the players is well above average – it doesn't do any favours for its playability. Like many footy games, Planet Football puts you in control of the player nearest the ball – unfortunately, that player is often out of sight 'behind the camera', causing much confusion and gnashing of teeth.

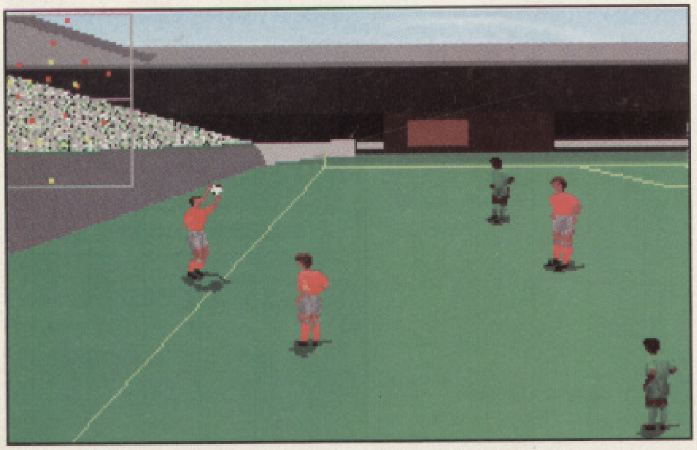
Although this view works okay-ish if you're playing into the screen (i.e. you can see the opposition's goal at the far end of the pitch), it's crippling if you're playing out of it. Passing becomes a random thing – you just hoof the ball and hope that there's someone there to receive it. And scoring a goal is near impossible – the net looms into view so quickly that you have next to no time to set up a decent shot.

Yes, there's a scanner which tells you where all the players are, but it doesn't help a great deal. And besides, where's the fun in playing a game where you spend your time squinting at a pulsating mass of tiny red and yellow dots?

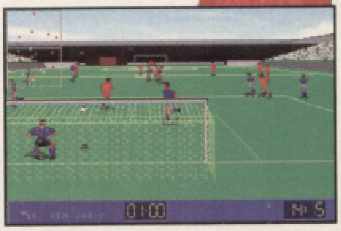
I appreciate that the developers were no doubt trying to bring a new twist to the over-crowded footy sim genre, but if your 'new twists' hamper the basic gameplay then you might as well not bother in the first place. Doesn't anybody ever learn from past mistakes? After all, this 3D approach to soccer is nothing new; both Striker and MicroProse International Soccer tried it in the past – and it didn't work that well in those games, either.

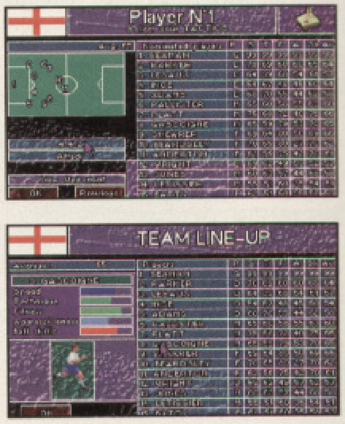
Oh, and one final thing before I sign off – Planet Football describes fouls as 'faults'.

Sigh...



(Left) "To me, to me!" The bored players indulge in a game of 'Catch'.
(Right) The victorious team hold the Cup aloft – bet they were controlled by the computer.





PLANET FOOTBALL

INFOGRAMES/CONDOR

(071) 738 8199

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 7Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Um... The animation of the players is quite nice.

...AND THE BAD

- Though impressive, the 3D view makes any sort of realistic or satisfying play impossible.
- Lack of stadium detail means there's little 'big match' atmosphere.
- Isn't the World Cup just old news now?

Overall

54%

CU AMIGA

THE MAGAZINE FOR A500, A600, A1200 & CD32 OWNERS

SEPTEMBER
ISSUE
MIND BLOWING

FIND OUT WHAT BLOWS ANDY'S MIND WHEN HE CHECKS OUT *BRILLIANCE 2*, *LIGHTWAVE*, *IMAGINE 3* AND TOYS WITH THE MOST POWERFUL AMIGA DESKTOP VIDEO SYSTEM EVER SEEN!

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All this and more than you can imagine in CU AMIGA September 1994, on sale August 19th.

CU AMIGA, IT'LL BLOW YOUR MIND!

On the Ball

After Graham 'Turnip' Taylor, Dean Evans prepares to be likened to a popular vegetable as he tackles Ascon's World Cup footy management game.

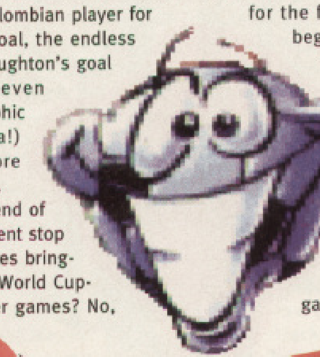
Look here, if I see another football game I'm going to smash... Ah-ha, what's this? Oh, it's *another* football game. Thanks a lot Dave. No, really. Thanks a bunch...

Now, as far as I'm concerned, the World Cup has slipped silently into history. Okay, so the Brazilians are probably still dancing a celebratory Samba down in Rio, but for the rest of us the murder of that Colombian player for scoring an own goal, the endless bookings, Ray Houghton's goal against Italy, even Baggio's catastrophic penalty miss (ha!) are now little more than TV memories.

But does the end of the 1994 tournament stop software companies bringing out yet more World Cup-inspired computer games? No, of course it doesn't. And after World Cup USA '94, FIFA Soccer, Empire Soccer, Kick Off 3, Planet Football and numerous others, now it's Ascon's turn to chip in with the World Cup edition of On The Ball, a rather pretty football management sim.

Although I'm sick to death of football games, I have to admit that On The Ball is an impressive game indeed. With no arcade-y bits, no aftertouch and no joystick waggling, OTB is a thoroughly comprehensive management simulation, and this World Cup edition — there will be a league version available in a few months' time — allows you to take control of any national team and lead them through the regional qualifiers, into the World Cup and on to glory, cash bonuses and lucrative sponsorship deals with international fizzy drinks conglomerates.

So how does it all work? Well, after choosing the difficulty level, your favourite national team and the venue for the forthcoming finals, OTB begins with a graphic of an opulent high-rise office. This plush pad is your base of operations during the World Cup qualifying phase and in this section of the game, time chuggs along in four week 'turns'.



In each of these game turns you can choose to perform three main actions and in a typical month you'll have the option to play a friendly match, hold a team training session or to nip out to watch other national teams play, hopefully gauging their strengths and weaknesses for future reference.

Although it might sound complicated, OTB ties all these options together with a very simple-to-use graphic interface. For example, if you move the mouse pointer over the desk, you can access the appointments diary or the team selection screen. Click on the hat-stand in the corner and you can end the current turn and move onto the next.

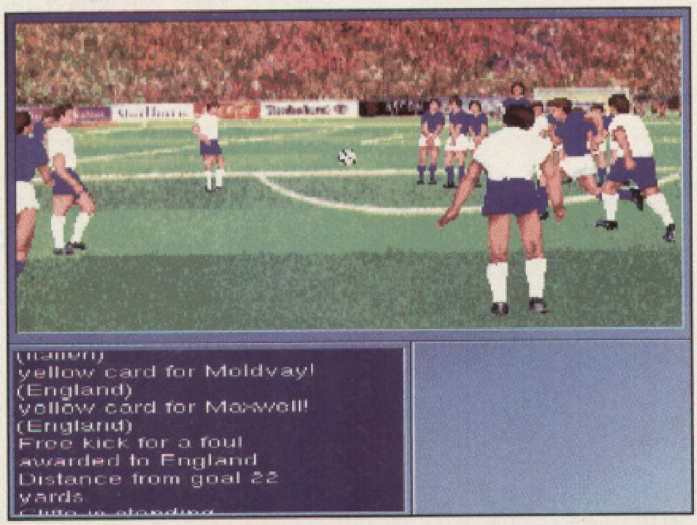
Bar the three actions mentioned above, you can also select your team here, chat to your players on a one-to-one basis and even adjust your individual playing style, i.e. deciding whether you'll play the ball out to the wings or if your players should take Klinnsman-style 'dives' in the opponent's penalty area.

As for the players, each has a preferred playing position, i.e. attack, defense, midfield, etc, and both a skill and a form rating next to their name. While the skill rating rarely changes, the form score, which is calculated out of 20, can rise and fall quite spectacularly. So, it's important to keep a close eye on key players, not only checking on their strengths and weaknesses, but keeping tabs on their self-confidence and attitude too. Obviously, if individual players aren't on form, the team isn't going to play well as a unit.

But practice, so they say, makes perfect, and when you want to improve the form of your players, the training ground is the ideal place to do it. You can employ several different training options here, ranging from penalty taking to fitness workouts and you can also play practice matches against your own reserves. Training, however, is a gamble. While some players may gain form points, others invariably lose them. Worse still there's always the possibility that someone might pick up an injury. Do you risk heavy fitness training? Oh, decisions, decisions...

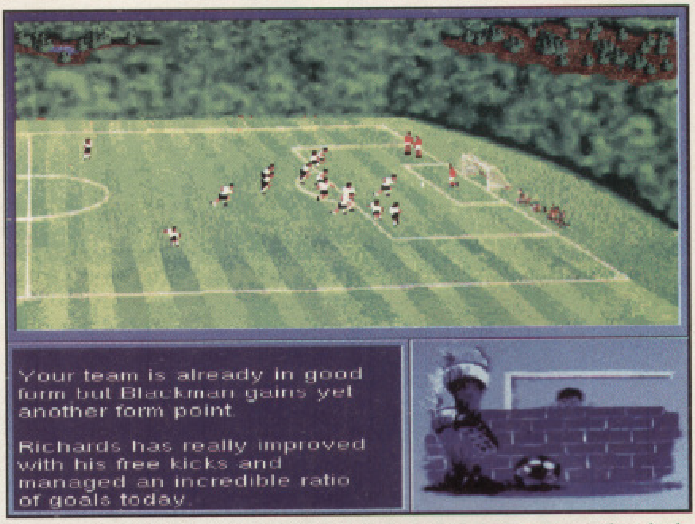
Whatever happens, after the training sessions and the qualifying matches — and assuming you qualify for the World Cup — you must then streamline your pool of players down to a squad of 22 for the tournament proper. Naturally, certain players will be unhappy if they're left out of the team but you can often soften the blow by talking to them personally. One-to-one chats between player and coach can also have the opposite effect, motivating a player who has suffered an emotional setback or a footballing crisis of confidence.

I hope by now that you've realised that On The Ball isn't just a manage-



yellow card for Moldvay!
(England)
yellow card for Maxwell!
(England)
Free kick for a foul
awarded to England
Distance from goal 22
yards

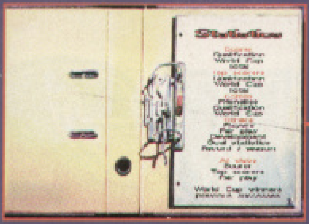
OTB not only features a play-by-play commentary but also some striking animated sequences that illustrate key moments in the match. Shame they don't move as well as they look...



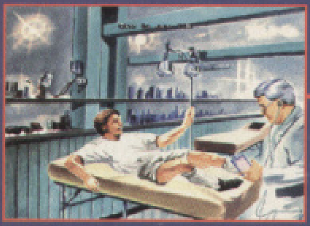
Your team is already in good form but Blackman gains yet another form point.

Richards has really improved with his free kicks and managed an incredible ratio of goals today.

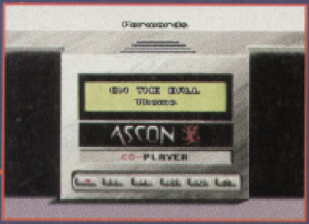
Success on the field is down to the individual form of your players. Form points can be gained (or lost) on the training field practising headers, beating the offside trap, penalties and so on.



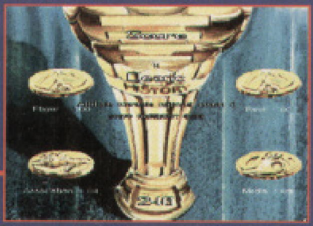
You want stats? I'll give you stats, mate.



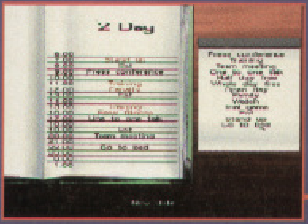
Tell it to me straight, Doc. Will he play?



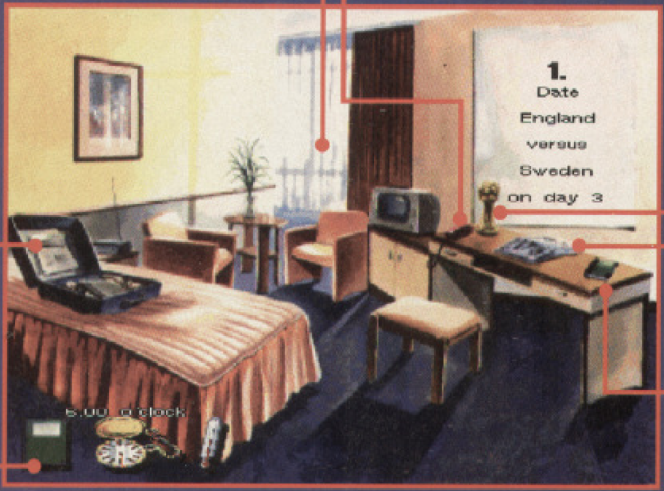
Don't like the music? Change the CD.



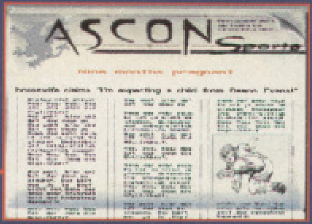
Gauge your success on the score screen .



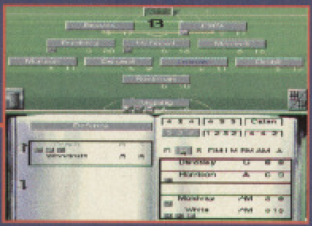
Plan your team's schedule in your diary: Training, rest days, press conferences, you must allocate your time accordingly.



The options in On The Ball can be accessed from this central screen by clicking on various objects. This is, in fact, my spartan hotel room and my first World Cup tie is 3 days away.



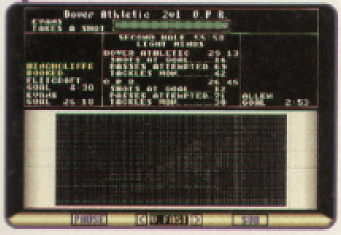
Follow your career in the local rag.



Selecting a well balanced team is vital. Farshtey is in dazzling form, it seems.

It's a bit like...

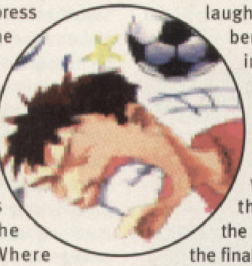
...Premier Manager 2, which is still one of the best league management sims available on the PC. Take control of a struggling conference team, buy and sell your players, attract sponsors, modernise your ground and ultimately lead your team to league, cup and European glory. Ooh, I can't wait for Premier Manager 3...



ment game where you juggle stats and information. There's much more to it than that. You must be prepared to look after your players, training them efficiently and briefing them on tactics and team selection. And as a coach you're also expected to attend press conferences, grabbing the praise and the glory when your team is successful and taking the media flak and the insults when they're not.

But what really sets OTB apart from its rivals is the presentation of the matches themselves. Where Premier Manager 2 has a bland horizontal bar, a blob moving backwards and forwards and some rudimentary animations, OTB features very attractive cutscenes of key match moments and a play-by-play match commentary.

The On The Ball animations are beautifully drawn and help to illustrate free kicks, penalties and sweeping attacks. As you can see here they look pretty damned impressive, but sadly they don't move as well as they could. But although the animation is jerky and sometimes laughable, it must be remembered that the graphics are infinitely better than any other football management game can offer. You actually get drawn in to the action. You want to watch the animations — they're not just filling up the time between kick-off and the final whistle.



There's so many options crammed into On The Ball, it's nigh-on impossible to mention everything here without the review degenerating into a list. But suffice it to say, OTB is a game that delves deep into the strategy side of football, the sort of game that considers 'aftertouch' a rude word and places its emphasis squarely on man-management, tactics and training sessions.

With five levels of difficulty, neat graphics and and, of course, lots of stats and miscellaneous World Cup info, I'd say that OTB is as good as, if not better than, Gremlin's Premier Manager 2. It may turn out to be a bit limited because you can only play the World Cup, but if you're fed up of trying to get to grips with Sensible Soccer or if you just fancy a change of footballing perspective, On The Ball is the perfect cure for your World Cup withdrawal symptoms.

ON THE BALL

ASCON/DAZE MARKETING

(071) 328 2762

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 16Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- A management game that doesn't take itself too seriously and isn't bogged down with statistical waffle.
- The brightly drawn animations, although sometimes a bit jerky, add a refreshing element of tension .
- With five difficulty levels, you can make your job as easy or as tough as you want.

...AND THE BAD

- Although you can play the World Cup in any country and with any world team, OTB might still prove to be a bit limited in the long term.

Overall

86%

David Upchurch delves into Norse legend with Core Design's arcade adventure.

Heimdall 2

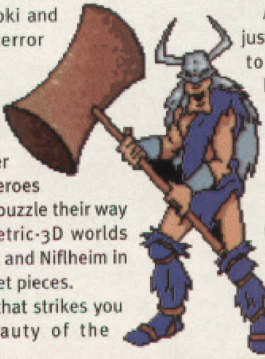
If you thought that the evil Loki was defeated at the end of Heimdall, then think again. Like all good bad guys (if that isn't a contradiction in terms) he has risen again, wreaking havoc wherever he goes with his legions of foul, smelly Hakrat warriors.

In Asgard, the home of the gods, Odin The Allfather decides that something must be done to stop this ne'er-do-well, and so he sends brave Heimdall and Ursha the Valkyrie on a quest to find the lost fragments of an amulet. Once reformed, it has the power to freeze Loki and end his reign of terror once and for all...

And so begins Heimdall 2, an arcade adventure in which the player controls the two heroes as they battle and puzzle their way through the isometric-3D worlds of Midgard, Utgard and Niflheim in search of the amulet pieces.

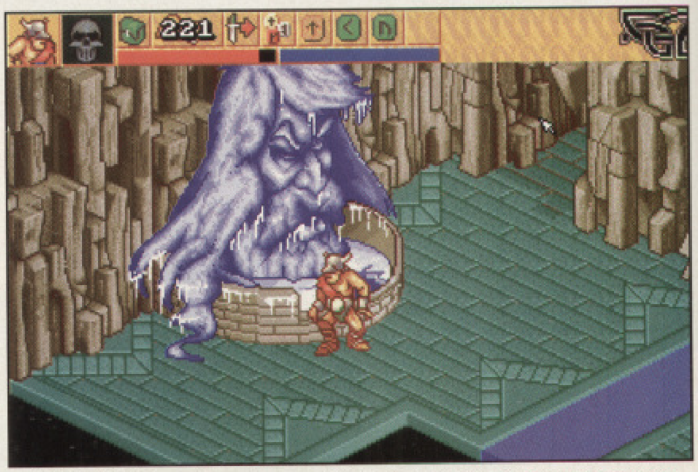
The first thing that strikes you is the sheer beauty of the game's graphics. All the character are rendered in a charming, cartoon-y way (which is probably to be expected, given that the graphic artist is a former animator). And, unlike most isometric-3D games, the rooms are all very different from each other and not simply a rearrangement of basic building blocks.

The sound, in stark contrast, is very poor, with only a monotonous tune droning away in the background and the odd, feeble spot effect to accompany your wanderings. Still, with graphics as good as these you can just — *just* — about live with that. Indeed, such is their quality, that you tend to find yourself playing on just to see what visual delights lie beyond the next room.

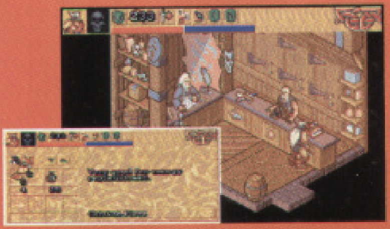


And this, it has to be said, is just as well, because it's not going to be the puzzles bringing you back for more. To say that they're simple is an understatement — most of them are so basic that a sub-normal amoeba could solve them.

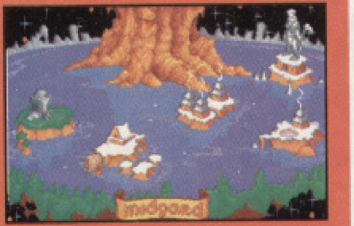
Take this little conundrum, for example. You're locked in a cell, which is empty except for a loaf of bread. Outside the cell is a door release lever and a mouse scurrying around. What do you do? You got it — give the bread to the mouse, and in gratitude it jumps on the lever and sets you free. It's so obvious a solution that you don't even have to think about it.



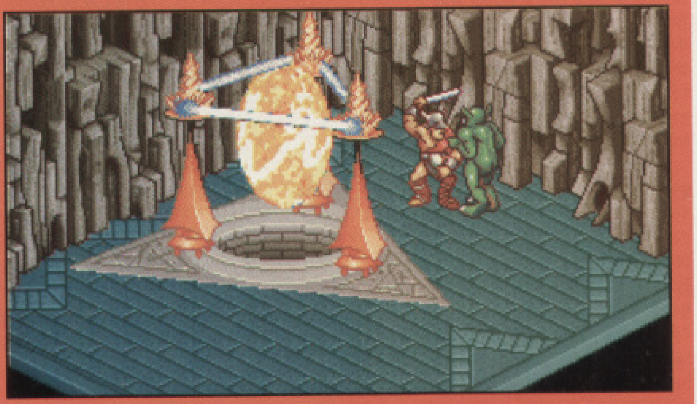
Heimdall 2 is full of soop-ah graphics, especially for the backgrounds. It's just a pity that the same care and attention-to-detail wasn't lavished on the gameplay...



In the shops, Heimdall can buy food and better weapons using the cash he's found.



On these map screeens Heimdall can sail between the islands making up each world.



Because of the fuzzy impreciseness of the mouse and keyboard controls, successfully defeating your enemies in combat is more a matter of luck than skill.

Admittedly, this is one of the simplest puzzles, but the rest aren't much tougher. And without good puzzles to solve, there isn't a lot left to keep you interested. The interaction with other characters is minimal — you just walk up to them and, if they've got some pertinent information or a quest for you to go on, they'll speak to you. You can't question them — they just say their piece then clam up.

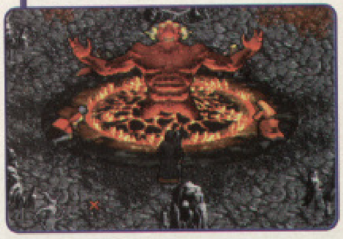
On the plus side, some of this dialogue is very entertainingly written, with a strong vein of off-beat, tongue-in-cheek humour running throughout. Others may find a lot of it incongruous with the setting and complain that it ruins the atmosphere but, well, it made me laugh, so there.

One thing I couldn't understand about Heimdall 2 is why Ursha was along for the ride. Heimdall and Ursha aren't individual sprites — when you switch characters, Heimdall morphs into Ursha and vice versa, so you can't do clever things like split them up and send them to seperate parts of the world.

But unless you have a preference for playing as a woman, there's not much point being her. Ursha's skills are not really any different to Heimdall's, there are no puzzles that have to be solved by a woman as opposed to a man, and the characters you meet respond in exactly the same way no matter what sex you are — all things, incidentally, which would've added more depth to the game. So, ultimately she ends up as a spare backpack, somewhere to put any items that Heimdall can't carry.

It's a bit like...

...Ultima VIII. Origin's game is far superior to Core Design's effort, boasting more detailed (if not quite as charming) graphics, a far stronger and much more mature plot, stacks of tough puzzles to solve, superior combat and a vast gameworld to explore. What it lacks, however, is Heimdall 2's excellent sense of humour. Ooh, I love a man who can make me laugh...

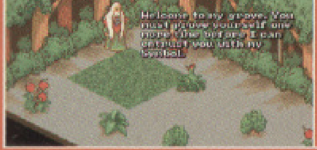


For an arcade adventure, in which fast, precise reactions to events are frequently everything, Heimdall 2's controls are unbelievably poor. Theoretically you can perform every action using just the mouse, but I wouldn't advise it unless you enjoy pulling out your hair in great, blood-soaked handfuls.

Making Heimdall walk from A to B, for example, should be a simple case of pointing-'n'-clicking on wherever you want him to go and leaving him to get on with it. But for a mighty god, Heimdall is remarkably lacking in smarts, unable to negotiate the simplest location without getting stuck on any pieces of furniture that lie in his way.

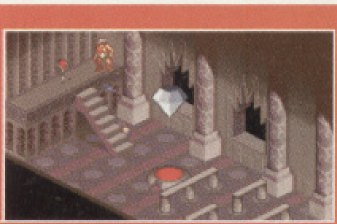
The *Seven* Trials Of **Heimdall**

Here Himdall meets Ander, a fellow god. The kindly deity reveals that an amulet piece lies in the Council Chamber at the end of the hall — but Heimdall can only gain entrance to it once he's collected the six Symbols of the Gods...

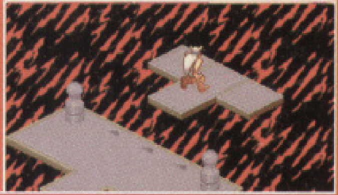


Welcome to my grove. You must prove yourself one more time before I can entrust you with my Symbol.

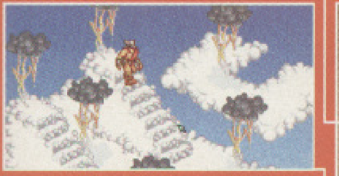
(Left) To gain Ander's Symbol, Heimdall must solve a cunning logic puzzle revolving around the good and bad properties of the berry bushes growing in his grove.



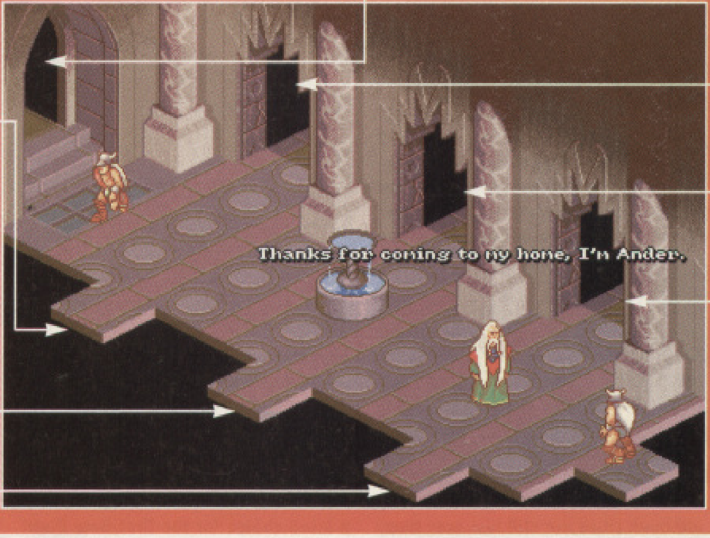
At last! With all the Symbols in his possession, Heimdall finally enters the Council Chamber... where yet another puzzle must be solved before he can get his hands on the amulet shard. As always, out of the frying pan, into the fire...



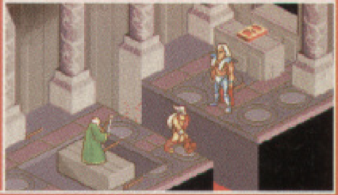
Myra, Goddess of Light, has a magic maze leading to her symbol. Heimdall must choose which way to go wisely, before the ground literally disappears from under his feet.



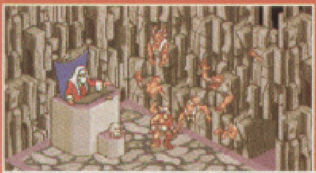
The Symbol of Ketar, God of Air, is hidden within a maze of fluffy, white clouds, littered with electrical storm teleports.



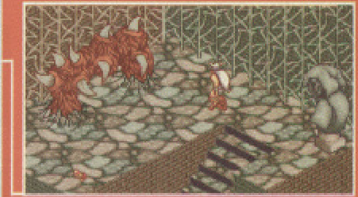
Thanks for coming to my home, I'm Ander.



Two top archers guard the symbol of Jarok, God of the Weak. Our hero must be quick on his feet and quicker with his bow to survive.



Those who wish to gain the Symbol of Siri, Goddess of Justice, must be prepared to be judged themselves. Have you been *good*..?



Here resides the Death Goddess, Mirin. But there's no Symbol to be seen, and everything is deadly to the touch. Is death the answer?

In combat things get even worse. It seems simple enough on paper — double-clicking with the right or left mouse buttons will make Heimdall either attack with whichever weapon you've put in his hand or defend with his shield. Unfortunately, you also have to point Heimdall at his aggressor using the aforementioned dodgy controls — he won't automatically turn to face him — meaning that in the heat of battle he can all too easily end up flailing away ineffectually at thin air, while his opponent hammers away at his side or back.

Using the keyboard improves matters somewhat, but they're still not perfect. For instance, rather than using the obvious system of making Heimdall walk in a given direction until you take your finger off the relevant key, Core have opted for one in which, once you've told Heimdall to move in a certain direction, he'll keep on walking until you press the key again, making positioning him precisely a real pain.

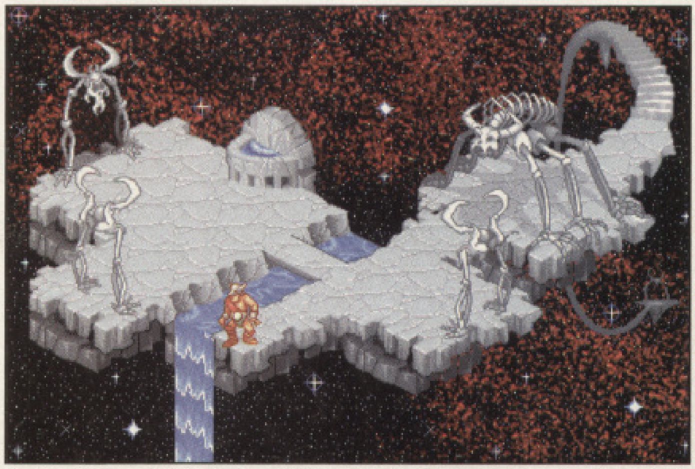
Fortunately these, er, 'idiosyncrasies' are not fatal, and once you get used to them they're not really that much of a problem. But while performing such simple actions has been made a severe pain in the butt, tasks that you'd think would be more complicated are simplicity itself.

Like the excellent magic system, for example. As Heimdall explores he comes across runestones which, when put together in the right sequence, create magical spells like Fireball and Detect Magic. However, the 'formulae' for these spells can only be found on scrolls, which again are hidden.

All this conspires to limit the type and power of spells you can cast at any point in the game, preventing you from running before you can walk or romping through the early stages of the game by lobbing lightning bolts at everyone. Why this same level of clever game design wasn't applied to the clumsy areas mentioned before is a total mystery.

Heimdall 2 is the proverbial curate's egg. And the sad thing is that a lot of the bad elements could have been corrected so easily — like the doorways which appear to be open but you can't go through them because... well, because you can't, okay? So why have them there at all?

The exciting legends of the Vikings contain enough source material for dozens of wonderful computer games. Sadly Heimdall 2, with its shallow gameplay, abysmal controls and endless flaws, isn't one of them.



The Hall Of Worlds is Heimdall 2's equivalent of Clapham Junction, a place where the magical portals leading to various parts of each world converge. It makes getting around dead easy...

HEIMDALL 2

CORE DESIGN/IN-HOUSE

(0332) 297797

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 14Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Simply *luvverly* graphics.
- Bags of tongue-in-cheek humour.

...AND THE BAD

- Badly designed and plain fiddly player interface can be irksome, especially during combat.
- Having two main characters is a total waste of time.
- The puzzles are very simple to solve, meaning that it's likely to prove too easy for most.

Overall

61%

Overlord

Alex Fraser takes to the skies in Virgin's recreation of the D-Day landings.

June 6th, 1944. D-Day. The beginning of the end of World War 2. Brave soldiers from a half-dozen nations crossed the Channel in the early dawn light and took the battle to the Nazis. It was one of the most incredible exercises in military logistics since Hannibal went mountaineering with his elephants.

And I know because I watched the recent 50th Anniversary documentaries on TV, and they told me all about it. They also interviewed the RAF pilots who helped make it all possible by running endless missions in the months before the invasion. And I guess the folks at Rowan must have seen the programme too since now they've brought us Overlord, the D-Day flight sim.

In case you didn't know, Rowan were the people responsible for Virgin's Reach For The Skies, a flight sim which featured beautifully Gouraud-shaded Spitfires scrambling to intercept waves of German bombers and stunningly-rendered Messerschmitts dogfighting Hurricanes over the Kent coast. Trouble was, it also 'featured' absolutely no ground detail and thoroughly infuriating gameplay.

Still, it was a game engine with potential, and for Overlord Rowan have enhanced it so that it now offers full SVGA graphics to anyone with a machine powerful enough to display them. But even in good old VGA the planes still look absolutely, mind-blowingly gorgeous, and there's actually some real ground detail for you to fly over. Not a lot, admittedly, but some — although cities are still just grey blobs on a green background, even at roof-skimming altitudes.

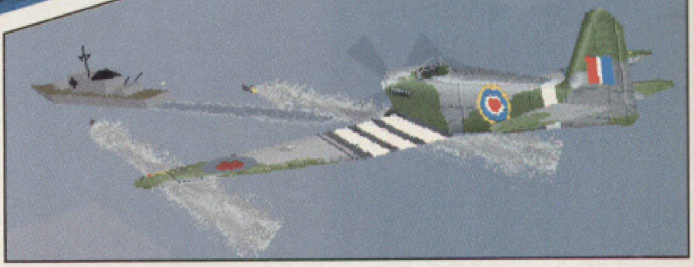
But the most impressive thing about the graphics is that they can be adjusted to your PC's speed without turning into Pacific Strike ugliness on slower machines, although I guess the spartan ground detail and empty-feeling cockpit help keep the speed up, as does the lack of a true virtual cockpit. I know I'm a snob with my fast 486, but I thought stuff like that was getting pretty much standard for flight sims nowadays.

Putting the look of the game aside for a minute, Overlord is a fair piece of kit. You can fly any one of three planes, each handling slightly differently, which may not be as much variety as Reach offered but is enough for a good mix of missions. And you certainly do get a good mix of missions, from sweeps and escorts to bombing train sidings and bridges. And, of course, there are the obligatory generic 'go out there and kill everybody' missions.

The fluid graphics coupled with some decent external views make the planes particularly easy to fly. There aren't too many keys to learn, and the quick 'scramble' option makes Overlord a good choice for the first-time flight simmer who doesn't want too much technical bumph but fancies plenty of 'seat of yer pants' flying action.

Unfortunately, the campaign side of things isn't anywhere near as well thought-out as in, say, MicroProse's excellent Pacific Air War. For all Overlord's ease-of-use, after a while I'd definitely feel the need to move on to something with a bit more 'meat'. Overlord has a slightly wishy-washy feel about it; there aren't enough planes filling the skies most of the time and the ground still doesn't feel solid enough.

Overall, Overlord builds well on Reach For The Skies and is a game I can recommend if you want Euro dogfights or you're just breaking into the joys of what flight sims are all about. However, if you simply want a World War 2 flight sim then there are definitely better games around. Third time lucky for Rowan, perhaps?



(Above) If you're the lucky owner of an above-par 486 then you'll be able to enjoy Overlord's smart SVGA graphics. But even in hi-res, the ground objects are still disappointingly lacking in detail.

OVERLORD

VIRGIN/ROWAN SOFTWARE

(081) 960 2255

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 14Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster and Adlib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

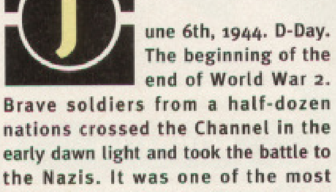
- The SVGA graphics update fairly swiftly — provided you've got a 486.
- The planes are easy to fly, so even a novice on keyboard should notch up a few kills pretty quickly.

...AND THE BAD

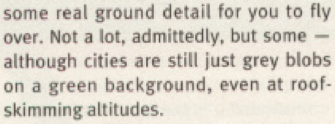
- Although the planes look gorgeous, the ground could do with a bit of work.
- The cockpit feels somewhat spartan, as if an interior decorator ought to be brought in.
- Insufficient long-term challenge to keep veteran aces flying for months.

Overall

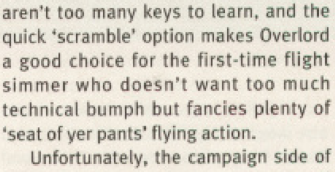
82%



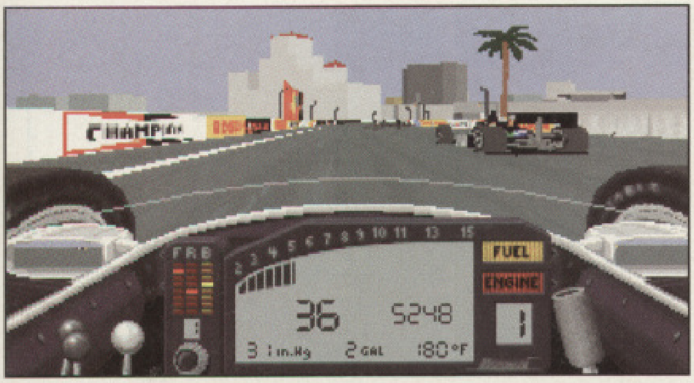
Hunting for ground targets is one of the better moments in Overlord. Best advice is to fly low, with the external view on to make the most of the limited ground scenery.



If you're coming in on a formation of bombers then don't forget to approach from the weakly-defended rear. And be prepared for a long haul, as they soak up a fair few hits.



If you die three times the date of the D-Day landings gets put back and you should feel ashamed of yourself for perpetuating Europe's slavery for those extra months.



IndyCar Racing Expansion Pack

Dean Evans jumps into a Lola in Virgin's add-on to IndyCar Racing.

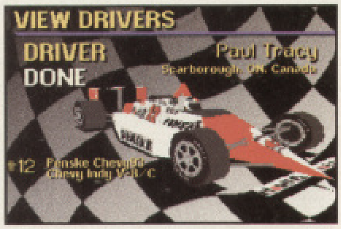
There can be no doubt that Virgin's IndyCar Racing is a superb racing sim. Boasting texture-mapped cars, accurately modelled circuits, replays, camera views and all the high-octane thrills of modern IndyCar Racing, it deservedly grabbed high review marks everywhere, bumping F1GP right off the track and into the gravel trap.

Unfortunately, half the tracks were missing. There was no Phoenix, no Mid Ohio Raceway and not an Ozzie Surfer's Paradise anywhere in sight. But hold on, if you're desperate to know what happened to half the IndyCar season, I can reveal that its held hostage on Virgin's new £17.99 IndyCar Racing Expansion Pack, a single add-on disk that corrects a few IndyCar bugs, allows you save your replays but, most importantly, slaps seven new tracks onto your hard disk.

Now I'm a fan of data disks. I think that when they're done properly — i.e, the B-Wing add-on for X-Wing, Righteous Fire for Privateer, etc — software publishers can not only eek out a few more precious months' longevity for their games but can also instantly catapult them back into the limelight. It's good for us punters too, because we can play more missions, scenarios in the gameworlds we've come to know and love.

But, in my opinion, these seven circuits should have been included in the original game, not held back in an attempt to squeeze a few extra spondoolicks into the corporate coffers. Although all you owners of the original IndyCar game will doubtless nip right out and buy this pack — and I can't fault the add-on disk at all — it's a shame that it costs another £17.99 to play tracks you should have had free in the first place.

Oh, and if you're wondering where the famous Indianapolis 500 track is, it's in the second expansion pack, together with the IndyCar Paint Kit. So, that's another £17.99 if you want the complete IndyCar experience. It's all way too expensive, if you ask me.



INDYCAR RACING PACK

Virgin/Papyrus

(021) 625 3388

£17.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 3Mb of hard disk space and IndyCar Racing

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Includes some minor bug fixes and seven new IndyCar racetracks for you to bomb around on.

...AND THE BAD

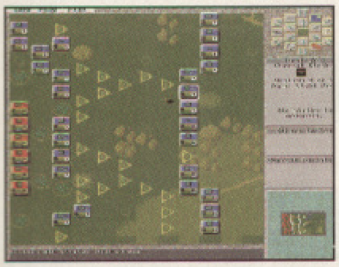
- These tracks should have been included in the original — by the time you've bought IndyCar everything, you'll have paid over £70!!

Overall

70%

Wargame Construction Set II: Tanks!

Alex Fraser enters strategic mode as he takes control of Tanks!

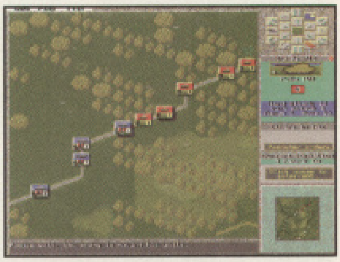


Tanks, eh? For the last three-quarters of a century the concept of sticking more and more armour and bigger and bigger cannons on a vehicle without wheels has fascinated military Tefal-heads all over the world. Now, with the help of Wargame Construction Set II, you can take command of hundreds of the metal monsters in just about any imaginable battle situation.

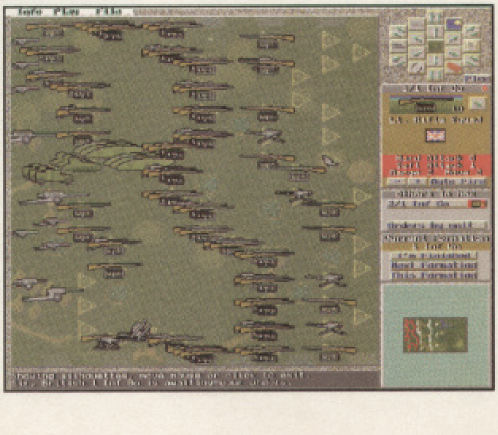
Tanks! is another, albeit very polished, hex-based strategy game from SSI. They've been pumping out this sort of thing as their bread and butter for as long as boardgames have been converted to computers. The basic game concept — move counters about an electronic map and order them to attack enemy counters until either you or they achieve a set of agreed objectives — isn't original. However, by now the folks at SSI have got the whole thing down to a very slick package indeed.

The graphics in Tanks! are nearly as good as those of the V For Victory series, the artificial intelligence is pretty special, and for sheer flexibility I doubt you'll beat it. There's a two-player mode, a one-player mode, or an all-computer mode. You can play any armoured engagement since tanks were first used, and any fantasy engagement you want to design.

This is all very well and good, but you really have to like your strategy games to get the most from it. Tanks! isn't going to draw new people to the genre like Blue Byte's Battle Isle did. All the new improved line-of-sight rules, pages of stats in the manual and whatever, are for us die-hards only.



If calculating the likelihood of your M113/120mmMr unit hitting your mate's unit of early production KV-1s over the brow of a hill five hexes away, and then working out the percentage chance of puncturing their left flank armour, is your idea of a entertaining night in with a few friends then go for it. If not... er... don't.



WARGAME CONSTRUCTION SET 2

SSI/In-house

(021) 625 3388

£39.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 10Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Gravis UltraSound, Pro Audio Spectrum and ThunderBoard soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Well-implemented and very flexible — as long as all you want to take part in is a tank battle.
- Once you get into the game, it's surprisingly exciting and intense.

...AND THE BAD

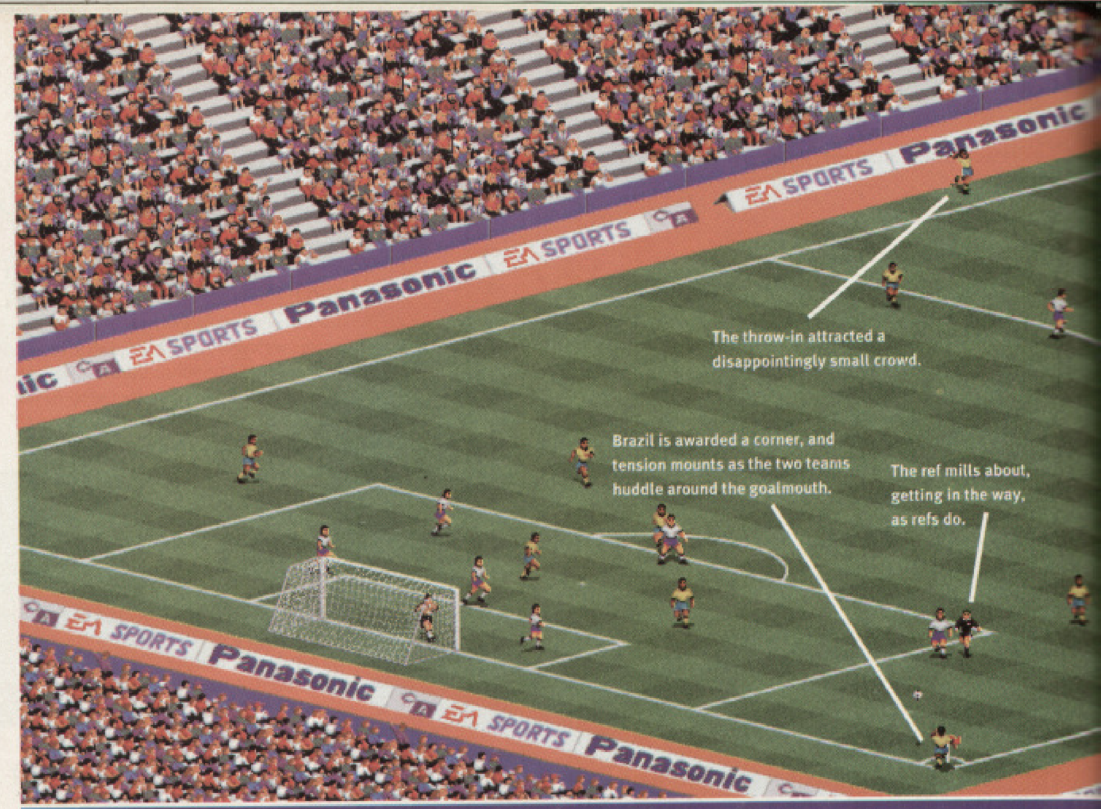
- *Strictly* for die-hard strategists — this is no Battle Isle, that's for sure.
- Graphically it's out of the Ark.

Overall

80%

FIFA International Soccer

EA's new footy game shoots straight to the top of the Premier League, reports David Upchurch.


The throw-in attracted a disappointingly small crowd.

Brazil is awarded a corner, and tension mounts as the two teams huddle around the goalmouth.

The ref mills about, getting in the way, as refs do.

The PC is an immensely powerful machine, capable of doing anything from hurling thousands of texture-mapped, Gouraud-shaded polygons around the screen to plotting dozens of sprites over colourful, parallax-scrolling backgrounds.

So why are nearly all the soccer sims available for it so blimmin' *awful*?

I mean, what's the problem? Are decent football games *that* hard to write? It would certainly seem so, given just about every soccer sim released to date plays worse than a bunch of overweight Sunday leaguers. In fact, of all the games on the market only Sensible Soccer scrapes its way — just — into the software Premier League — but even that mysteriously lost a lot of its magical playability during its conversion from the Amiga.

But there's good news. Yes, rejoice, footy fans, because the dark days are over. FIFA International Soccer is here — and it's fan-bleedin'-tastic. In fact, if I can be permitted to enter the realms of overblown hyperbole so early on in a review, I'd go so far as to say that, while FIFA's not perfect, it's still easily the best footy game on PC. Yes, really.

Officially endorsed by the Federation Internationale de Football Association, FIFA International Soccer allows you to pit any of 58 national teams from around the globe against each another in one-off exhibition matches, 8-team leagues or 24-team tournaments. All the teams are accurately modelled to reflect the performance of their 'real' counterparts — which means, in other words, that if you select England you'll never win a match.

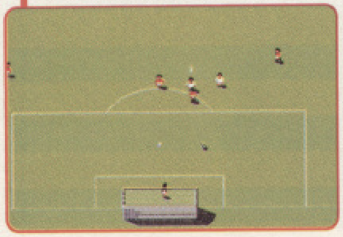
On loading up the game you're presented with an impressive yet daunting array of options. Fortunately, the defaults are sensibly set, so you can dive straight into a game without having to alter anything at all.

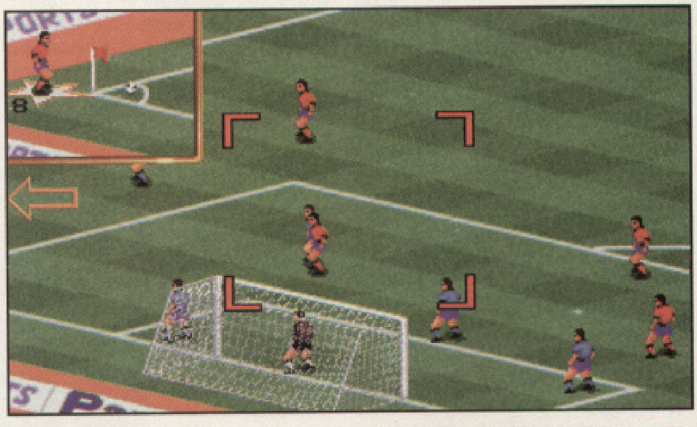
However, should you feel adventurous, you'll discover that as well as the usual options allowing you to change things like the match's length and the weather conditions (dry, damp, muddy, etc), you can also alter such things as how severely the referee deals with fouls, whether off-sides are ignored and the type of pitch (either good ol' grass or artificial turf).

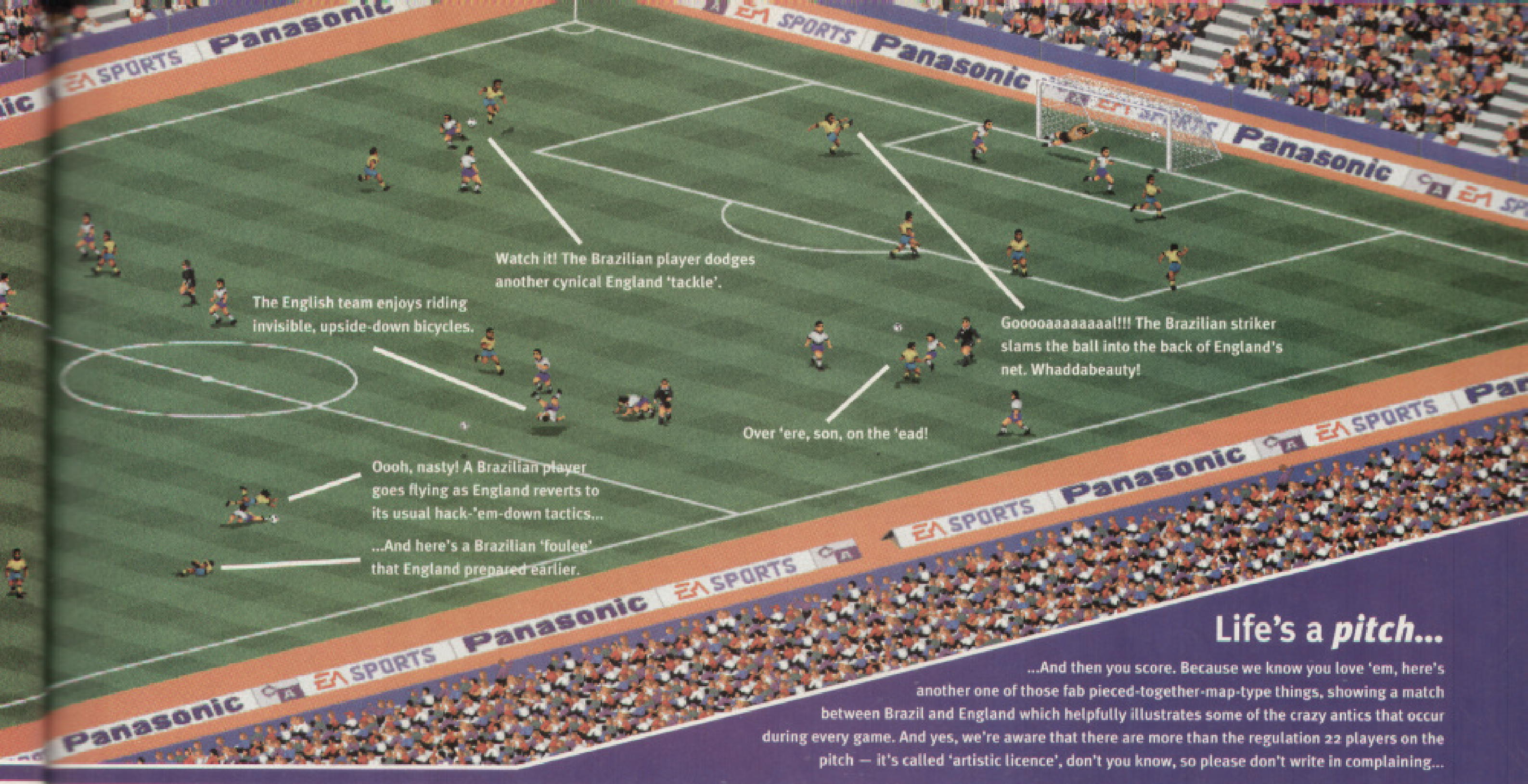
There's also an option to play either an 'action game' or a 'simulation', the main difference being that in 'simula-

It's a bit like...

...Sensible Soccer, but only because they're both footy games — in almost every respect they're completely different. Don't get me wrong — they're both great games, but in their own ways. While FIFA beautifully recreates the atmosphere and excitement of a big match, SensiSoccer's strengths are its instant accessibility and greater playability. It's a close run thing, but personally I prefer FIFA.




When the ball is thrown or kicked back into play, a 'sight' pops up which you use to aim where the ball will land. But whether it makes the mark or not depends heavily on the player's stats.


Watch it! The Brazilian player dodges another cynical England 'tackle'.
The English team enjoys riding invisible, upside-down bicycles.
Gooooaaaaaaaal!!! The Brazilian striker slams the ball into the back of England's net. Whaddabeauty!
Over 'ere, son, on the 'ead!
Oooh, nasty! A Brazilian player goes flying as England reverts to its usual hack-'em-down tactics...
...And here's a Brazilian 'foulee' that England prepared earlier.

Life's a *pitch...*

...And then you score. Because we know you love 'em, here's another one of those fab pieced-together-map-type things, showing a match between Brazil and England which helpfully illustrates some of the crazy antics that occur during every game. And yes, we're aware that there are more than the regulation 22 players on the pitch — it's called 'artistic licence', don't you know, so please don't write in complaining...

tion' mode your players' performance gradually deteriorates during the match to simulate tiredness. This, in tandem with the scores of other variables, means you can make each game as realistic or as 'arcade-y' as you prefer.

FIFA is certainly the prettiest footy game yet created. The player sprites are blessed with a comprehensive array of wonderful, fluidly-animated footballing moves, which are shown off in all their glory by the attractive and innovative 3D-style perspective. The crowd too is fully animated, adding greatly to the atmosphere.

These smart graphics are complemented by marvellously realistic digitised sound effects, such as crowd roars and terrace chants. Squint your eyes slightly while playing and you could easily fool yourself into believing that you're tuned in to Match Of The Day — well, you could if there was some foot-in-mouth commentator waffling away in the background, anyway.

But, as a great man once said (shortly before he was beaten into a bloody pulp by a maddened mob of cliche-detesting games mag readers), good graphics and sound do not a good game make. Fortunately, FIFA's no software bimbo — there's brains behind the beauty.

Your players can be controlled with either the keyboard or a two-button joystick. The function of each 'fire' button varies depending on whether or not the player currently under your control has the ball or not. If he has possession, then a tap on the first button will make him shoot while the second will make him pass.

If the player hasn't got possession, however, then the first button will make him tackle and the second will put you in control of the player nearest the ball (unlike most footy games, FIFA doesn't automatically give you control over the player nearest the ball which, although confusing at first, becomes a useful tool later on, allowing you to set up intelligent plays).

And that, basically, is it. Oh, there are some complications — for example, pressing both buttons together will allow you to perform lobs and chips, and even barge rival players, and in conjunction with the directional controls you can give the ball a spot of aftertouch — but you don't have to start worrying about all that sort of stuff until you've got used to the controls.

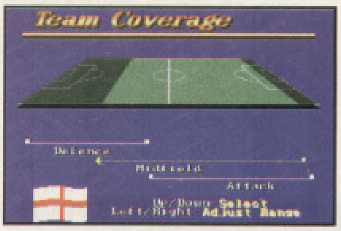
In theory it all sounds pretty straightforward. In practice, however, you'll discover that it takes a fair amount of time before you become even remotely proficient at the game, while mastering it will probably take you *ages*. On the one hand this is a good thing — when you eventually manage to score a goal, it's an immensely satisfying experience.

But on the the other hand those crucial first few plays can be very frustrating. Getting to grips with the game is not made any easier by the fact that the team's reactions to your control instructions is slightly context sensitive — what might a tackle in one situation may be a header or a bicycle kick in another. But while this might make for some visually-spectacular on-screen action, it all too often leaves the novice player staring bewildered at his joystick wondering "Just how did I *do* that!?"

Indeed, as my team fumbled and flopped ineffectively around the pitch, never once even getting within *sight* of the opposition goal, my initial verdict on FIFA was far from positive. Then, like a bolt from the blue, it all started to come together — as I strung together intricate passes and slammed home goal after goal, I was in footballing heaven.

(Left) Like most footy games, FIFA allows you to replay the last ten seconds or so of play and save golden moments to disk. Uniquely, FIFA also lets you to 'lock' the view to any of the 22 players and follow their individual performances.

(Below) Before the game or at any time during play you can halt the action and make adjustments to your team's formation and its tactics. You can even change the 'coverage', limiting how far up and down the pitch your defence, midfield and attack will patrol.



Believe me, once you get a handle on it you'll find FIFA a marvellously enjoyable experience. Admittedly, you never have *quite* the same degree of precise control over the ball that you have in Sensisoccer, but this is more than compensated for by the intense excitement and the superbly realistic atmosphere that FIFA generates.

Add to all this a comprehensive and very user-friendly team tactics editor, an excellent 'action replay' facility, stacks of neat touches and the fact that you can play against your friends (which, let me add, is *great* fun), and the result is a highly-polished piece of software that no PC gamesplayer — footy fan or otherwise — should be without. Provided you're prepared to put in a little work in the early stages, you'll have a ball with FIFA.

FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

EA/CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

(0753) 549442

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Adlib, Gravis UltraSound, Pro Audio Spectrum and SoundFX 3000 soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Amazingly entertaining both to play and to watch.
- Vast range of options allow you to make the game as 'arcade-y' or as realistic as you want.
- Excellent digitised sound effects add to the 'big match' atmosphere.

...AND THE BAD

- The controls take a bit of getting used to...
- ...And even when you've mastered them, you don't always feel *totally* in charge of the action.

Overall

87%

review

Alex Fraser goes to battle stations in EA's impressive follow-up to its award-winning naval computer sim.

Harpoon II

Tossing on the stormy seas of strategy gaming are a handful of recent naval simulators. Some, like Aegis: Guardian of the Fleet, were always destined to sink without a trace. Others, like Great Naval Battles II, get plain sailing by building on the reputation of their predecessors, adding new and exciting features to already excellent products.

But out in the Arctic waters there's a boomer with a cargo of warheads just itching to fire upon any water-based strategy game that dares to show its face. Although it's been there for some years, now it's back, bigger, meaner and smarter than before. Its name is Harpoon II — and it packs a punch.

The original Harpoon was lauded by gaming cognoscentii as a fine example of what you could do with a state-of-the-art PC (which, back then, was a 286 with EGA graphics). It allowed the player to set up exciting battles between fleets of modern naval vessels, which were then acted out using a game system free of hex maps, turn-based movement or any of the other boardgaming left-overs which marred the gameplay of its contemporaries.

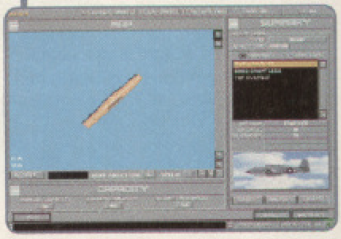
Some time after its launch came the first of the battlesets and expansion disks, adding every conceivable theatre of war to the imaginary (although quite feasible at the time) Cold War campaign proposed in the original game.

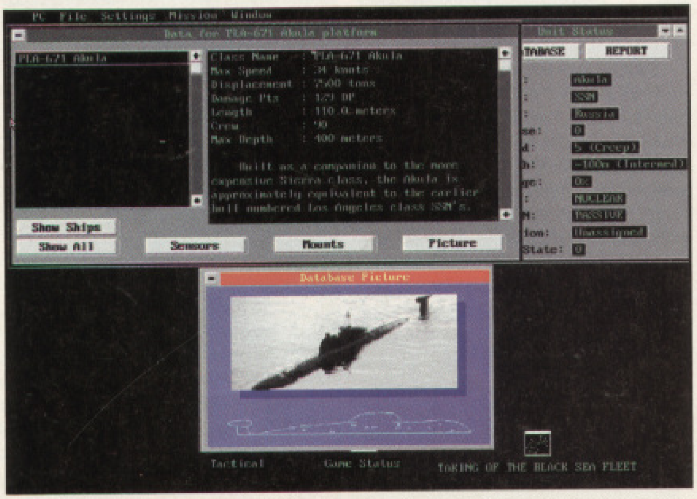
Now, at long last, Harpoon II rolls out from Three-Sixty's games designing dry dock. And it's a monster, packaged in a matt-black, no-messing, I-mean-business kind of box, containing a manual that could stun an ox and six HD disks packed to the brim with wholesome strategy goodness. From the off, you know these guys aren't fooling.

To tell the truth, Harpoon II is really half-way between a game and a simulation. Countless interviews with naval commanders and searches through military libraries have created something that (so Three-Sixty assure us) is so like being in a flagship's control room that even 'real' navy personnel would feel perfectly at home.

It's a bit like...

...Great Naval Battles II, which made a splash last issue. GNB II was set during WW2 and was a more hands-on, man-the-deck-guns action game. However, the quality of pure strategic depth wasn't quite as exceptional as here. In the end it's horses for courses, but the pure strategists among you might be happier doing away with the action side of things altogether to concentrate on tactics, in which case Harpoon II's just the ticket.



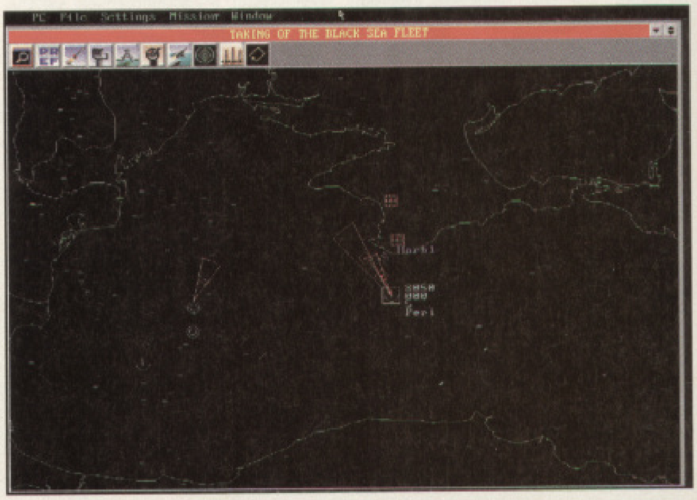


```
Class Name    : PLA-671 Akula
Max Speed     : 34 knots
Displacement  : 7500 tons
Damage Pts    : 121 DP
Length        : 110.0 meters
Crew          : 90
Max Depth     : 400 meters

    Built as a companion to the more
expensive Sierra class, the Akula is
approximately equivalent to the earlier
hull numbered Los Angeles class SSN's.
```

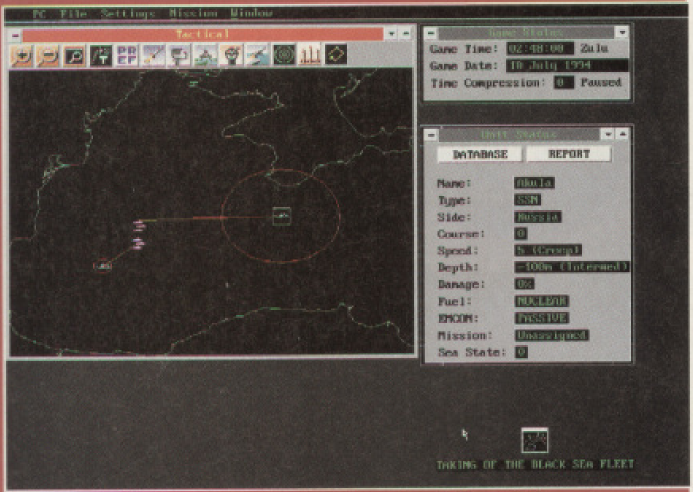
```
Akula
SSN
Russia
0
5 (Creep)
-100m (Intermed)
0%
NUCLEAR
PASSIVE
Unassigned
0
```

As amphibious forces scoot overhead, Russia's submarine fleet patrols under the waves, ready to pounce on unsuspecting enemy craft. Hurrah or boo-hiss, depending on which side you've chosen to play. Either way, these windows will tell you all about these under water critters.



PC File Settings Mission Window
TAKING OF THE BLACK SEA FLEET

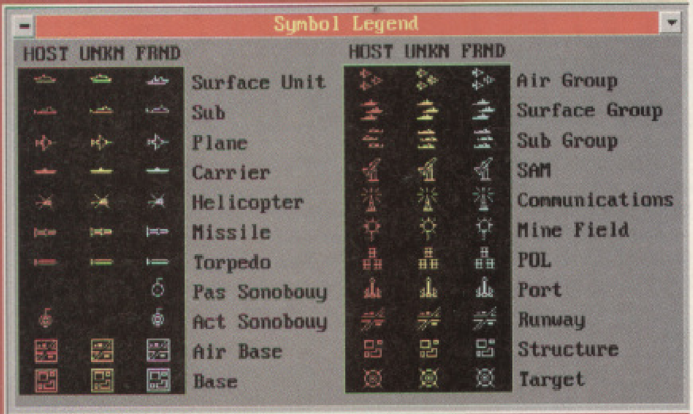
Things hot up pretty qickly in Harpoon 2, and both sides find more enemy activity than they bargained for. It's no easy life messing about on the ocean waves, no matter whose navy you've joined for the day.


PC File Settings Mission Window
Tactical
Game Status
Unit Status
DATABASE
REPORT
TAKING OF THE BLACK SEA FLEET

Game Time: 02:48:00 Zulu
Game Date: 10 July 1994
Time Compression: 0 Paused

Name: Akula
Type: SSN
Side: Russia
Course: 0
Speed: 5 (Creep)
Depth: -100m (Intermed)
Damage: 0%
Fuel: NUCLEAR
EMCON: PASSIVE
Mission: Unassigned
Sea State: 0

This is the sort of screen you can expect to spend your time looking at in Harpoon 2 — it's what you call 'functional' rather than attractive. Here, the Russian fleet is planning an amphibious assault against a strategic Ukrainian harbour, the rascals.



Look at all those pretty shapes! Unfortunately, if you don't know what your symbols indicate then you're sunk — no pun intended.

Thus the maps are inch perfect and the displays realistically modelled. An Iranian gunboat will react exactly as the Pentagon expect it to in real life. And no doubt the weather systems have had top meteorologists consulting on their movements and composition. This is the real McCoy of simulations we're talking about here, okay?

All of which would be of purely academic value if there wasn't some gamesplay attached, so I'm pleased to announce that this is one package that's unlikely to disappoint in that department. A lot of work has gone into this side of things.

Harpoon II boasts a completely new player interface based around Windows, allowing you to choose at any given time which displays to have on-screen, where they should be positioned and what size you want them to be. They can be minimized and scaled as you see fit and this gives the opportunity to produce a very open gamesplaying environment.

So if, in the heat of battle, you want several orders screens for each platform (ship, sub or plane) displayed, as well as a close-up tactical map, but when navigating you prefer an overview map and a database screen, then that's fine — just open and close the relevant windows accordingly.

This flexibility is the benefit of a customisable interface, but the price could well have been extreme confusion for all and sundry (whether you were previously a Harpoon player or not). But the potential for total mayhem and frustration, as well as a frustratingly steep learning curve, was clearly recognised by the design team who have worked hard on a truly excellent tutorial system.

There are seven tutorials in the game, covering more and more complex parts of the game in a manner that still keeps even the most basic stages fun. Full notes are provided in the manual but, this being Harpoon II, you can call up a tutorial guide in a window and follow the instructions on-screen. The tutorials are clearly written in a personable style, explaining and clarifying as necessary. I found them invaluable for setting me up for my first full battle.

Once I had chosen the battle I wanted to take part in out of the fifteen on offer I was in a new world. Fifteen battles may not seem like a huge amount and, indeed, it isn't — but if you buy Harpoon II you have to accept that it's essentially a game engine for which scores of add-on disks will be released in the months and years to come. But, to be fair, it's really no different to releasing new courses for Links or tracks for IndyCar Racing.

I'm not so keen on this data disk business myself — it can all get very expensive very rapidly if you want to make the most of your games — but Harpoon II does save itself in my eyes with two excellent and very worthwhile features.

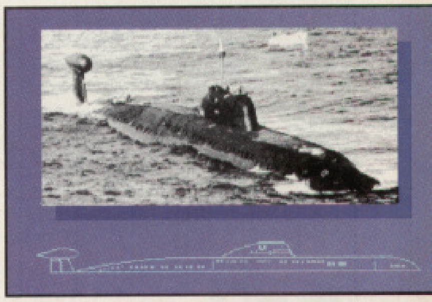
First, you can choose play settings that substantially alter the scenarios, for example the difficulty and which side you control (fancy being the Haitian gunboat against the US battlefleet for a challenge, instead of the normal 'play the superpower' option?). This adds value to each mission you get sent out on.

Second, Harpoon II comes with a built-in editor, allowing you to mess with each unit's mission orders. This isn't a scenario editor, since the basic set-up remains the same, but the ability to send units off on different sub-plots while you concentrate on the overall situation or on one small area of the conflict really does add a new angle to the whole game.

Inside the scenarios you'll find life very different to the tutorials. There are real enemy out there, moving, plotting and launching strikes at an alarming rate. To survive intact you have to move, plot and launch faster and more efficiently than they do.

As the missiles wing their way about the map and you try to achieve your objectives, things can get very tense and you'll be glued to the map screens, watching every detail, as absorbed as if you had been given the crosshairs view of the missile crews themselves. Harpoon II doesn't need texture-mapped, Gouraud-shaded 3D graphics of swooping planes to create excitement, a series of little red symbols are quite enough, thank you very much.

Harpoon II is a no-holds-barred strategy game that adds substantially to the original, which is no mean feat. There were things that disappointed me, sure, like the disappointing lack of a two-player mode and the fact that the screen can get a little crowded and claustrophobic if there's a large battle going on and you have several windows on-screen at once.



But despite that I was very impressed by Harpoon II — you can tell that this is a quality product lovingly created by a group of talented people. Its expandability should ensure that it doesn't fade from the strategy scene in a few months, and that's no bad thing. Indeed, there are other strategy games that could certainly learn a thing or two from Harpoon II.

For some people the game element may not be quite strong enough, but there's no lack of things to do. This is a game with a distinct feel, and is thoroughly enjoyable to play. I hope the add-on expansion packs live up to the game.

HARPOON II

EA/Three-Sixty

(0753) 549442

£44.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 25Mb of hard disk space, Windows 3.1 (or greater) and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Any Windows-compatible soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- A slick strategy sim, superbly presented and exceptionally easy-to-use.
- Marvellous tutorial system gets you up and running in no time.
- Variable difficulty of scenario and computer intelligence makes Harpoon II good fun for both beginner and experienced gamer.

...AND THE BAD

- Sometimes you get the feeling that there's too much simulator and not enough game.
- Would've benefitted from a few more scenarios.
- No two-player option.

Overall

86%

David Upchurch runs around and eats lots of sweets. And then he reviews Gremlin's new platform sequel.

Zool 2

I've got an admission to make — and some may find it more than a touch shocking. Get ready, because here it comes...

I...

...Like...

...(Gulp!)...

...Platform games.

Yes, it's true, damn you. You can keep your flight sims and RPGs. I like platform games. (Shout it!) I LIKE PLATFORM GAMES! (Louder!) **I LIKE PLATFORM GAMES!**

Super Mario Bros, Sonic the Hedgehog, Soccer Kid, Cool Spot, Aladdin... You name 'em, I've played 'em — and loved 'em all. Give me a cutesy sprite and some multi-coloured backgrounds to bounce it around on and I'm in games heaven.

So why, then, am I less than enthralled by Zool 2?

After all, on paper Zool 2 has all the ingredients of a great platform game — excellent character control, super-smooth parallax scrolling, well-animated and colourful graphics, stacks of levels, a multitude of varied power-ups, secret rooms, challenging end-of-level meanies... it's all there.

And as a sequel it scores too. True, the basic gameplay — zap nasties while collecting sufficient bonus objects to open each level's exit — remains pretty much the same as the first game, but everything now benefits greatly from a fresh lick of paint and a coat of high-gloss varnish.

Zool himself has a couple of new moves, most notably the ability to scale sheer rock faces, which make getting our hero from A to B a far less troublesome experience than it was in the original game and improves the playability no end.

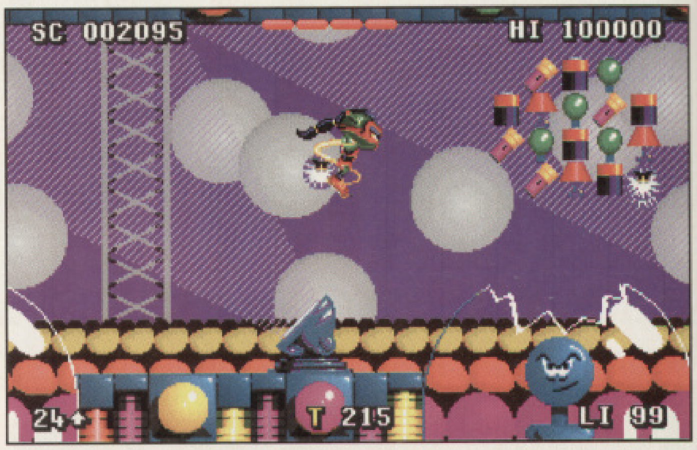
And on top of all that there's even the option to play as Zool's female Ninja accomplice, Zooz. Although most of the differences this makes to the game are cosmetic, it does add some interest as certain parts of some levels can be reached only by Zool and others only by Zooz, forcing you to adopt a different approach depending on who you choose to play as.

Sounds like a winner, doesn't it? But somehow it just doesn't *quite* work. Part of the problem is the game feels a bit cold and mechanical, as if it was written to a template — which, given that Zool was originally designed as the Amiga gamesplayer's answer to Sonic the Hedgehog, is perhaps none too surprising.

Zool 2's gameplay also suffers from a major design flaw. You see, it's sold as a frantic, super-fast romp, yet you can never build up a decent head of steam because nasties keep on getting in your way, stopping you dead in your tracks. It's a bit like having a Porsche that's forever locked in first gear — and you can probably imagine how annoying that would be.

And, to be honest, I'm not too keen on the character of Zool himself either. Even though he's a lot less bland than he was in his first outing, the eponymous 'Ninja from the Nth dimension' still lacks charm and real character, something which is pretty much essential in a good platform game.

But that's just a matter of personal taste. Fans of the first Zool game — and it seems there were a hell of a lot of you — will find this sequel vastly more enjoyable. But platforming connoisseurs would be better off opting for Virgin's Cool Spot or Krisalis' excellent Soccer Kid.



(Above) The curvaceous Zooz — Zool's female counterpart — in action. Which character you play as doesn't matter *that* much, as they behave pretty much alike. But while Zool is armed with a sword, Zooz wields an 'electro-whip', allowing her to bash her way into different parts of each level to Zool.

ZOOL 2

GREMLIN/SPEED LINK

(0742) 753423

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA and 1.5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

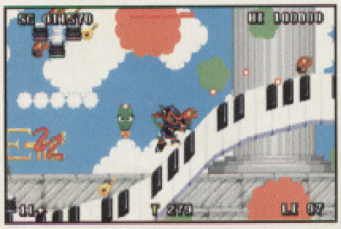
- Being able to play as different characters — and the fact that the gameplay changes depending on who you choose — is a neat touch.
- Enough action to keep even the most die-hard platform fan happy(ish) for ages.

...AND THE BAD

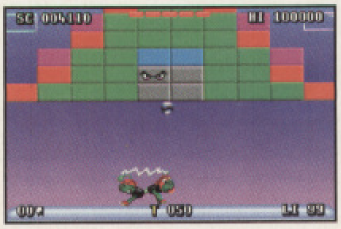
- Zool and Zooz lack the charm of other platform game heroes.
- Frustrating and frequently plain annoying gameplay.

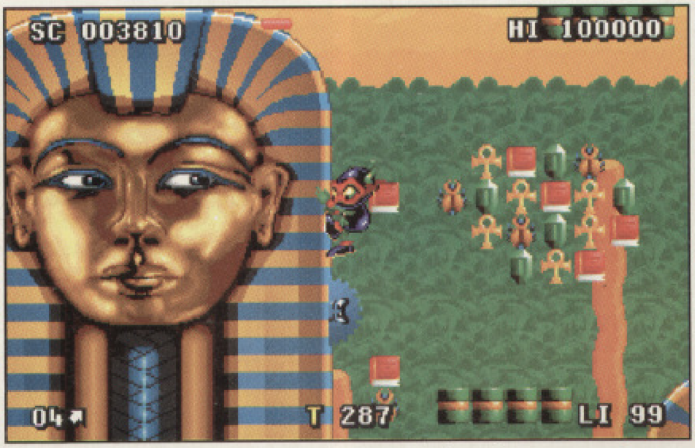
Overall

71%



(Above) Zool heads for his final showdown with Mental Block, the game's mega-baddy.





(Above) Zool can now climb up and down walls — a very handy new feature.

(Left) Collect three special tokens and you enter a Breakout-style bonus game, where you take control of Zoon, Zool's two-headed dog, and attempt to pick up extra lives by bashing bricks.

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TIE Fighter

David Upchurch *almost* succumbs to the Dark Side of The Force in LucasArts' Star Wars-inspired sequel.

You'll never know how much I was looking forward to TIE Fighter. For a start, I absolutely *loved* X-Wing, to which this is (as if you didn't know) the sequel. And I'll freely admit that if there was a contest to find the biggest Star Wars saddo in the universe then I would definitely be amongst the finalists, if not the outright winner.

So, given my high expectations, it perhaps isn't surprising to learn that I came away from TIE Fighter feeling slightly disappointed. Not, I hasten to add, because of any major, glaring flaws in the gameplay or design, but because of a number of minor faults that, together, *just* prevent TIE Fighter being the 'Game Of The Year' it had every chance of being.

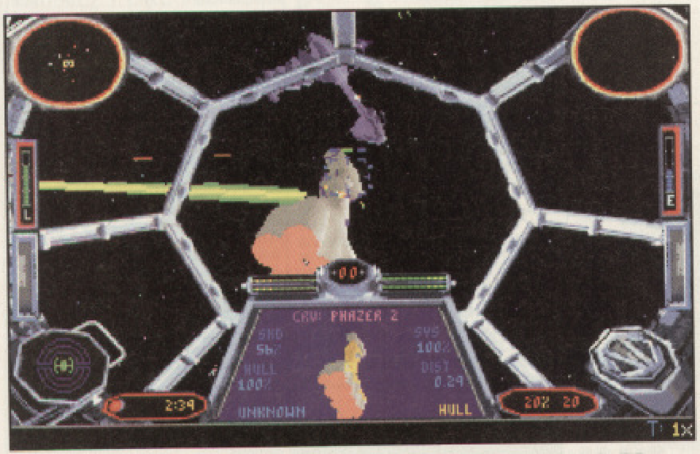
It all starts off promisingly enough. On loading you're presented with the familiar Star Wars logo and musical fanfare which, thanks to the miracle of iMUSE, neatly dovetails into a rendition of the Imperial March as the prologue text crawls up and into the screen.

This prologue is entertainingly written from an Imperial perspective, where the Rebels are seen as a dangerous bunch of fanatics trying to destabilise the Empire's efforts to bind the galaxy's many warring factions and alien races together under one ruling government.

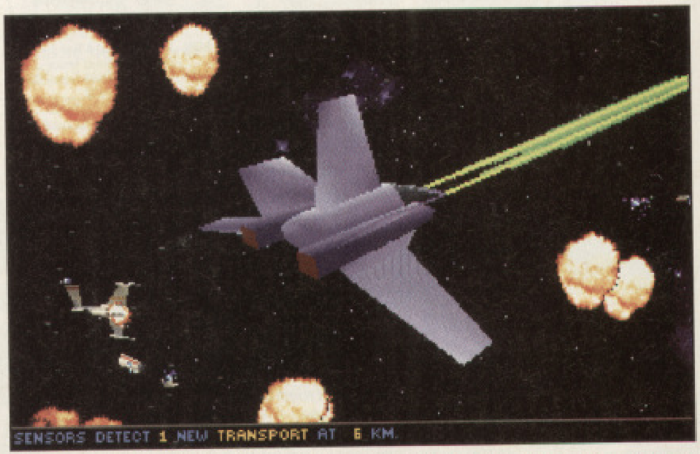
It nicely sets the scene for the action ahead, which takes place shortly after the destruction of the Rebel base on Hoth. However, after the first few missions — which centre around attempts to capture Rebel officials fleeing the besieged ice planet — the story veers away from events linked to the Star Wars movies and develops along its own lines, detailing the development of a new TIE-class fighter (with Hyperdrive capabilities, no less — ooh!) and the defection of one of the Imperial Navy's top brass.

Trouble is, while this plot is interesting enough in its own way — and the periodic animated cut-scenes, which are accompanied by excellent digitised speech and an equally-excellent iMUSE soundtrack, keep it moving along *very* nicely — it doesn't quite generate the same sense of urgency and excitement that X-Wing's did.

You see, X-Wing had the advantage that the player could see that all his efforts were building towards a do-or-die attack on the Death Star which, despite being the climax in just about *every* Star Wars computer game, was at least something players were likely to be familiar with from the movies. TIE Fighter, on the other hand, has no clear goal in sight, and the game suffers for it — not greatly, but a little.

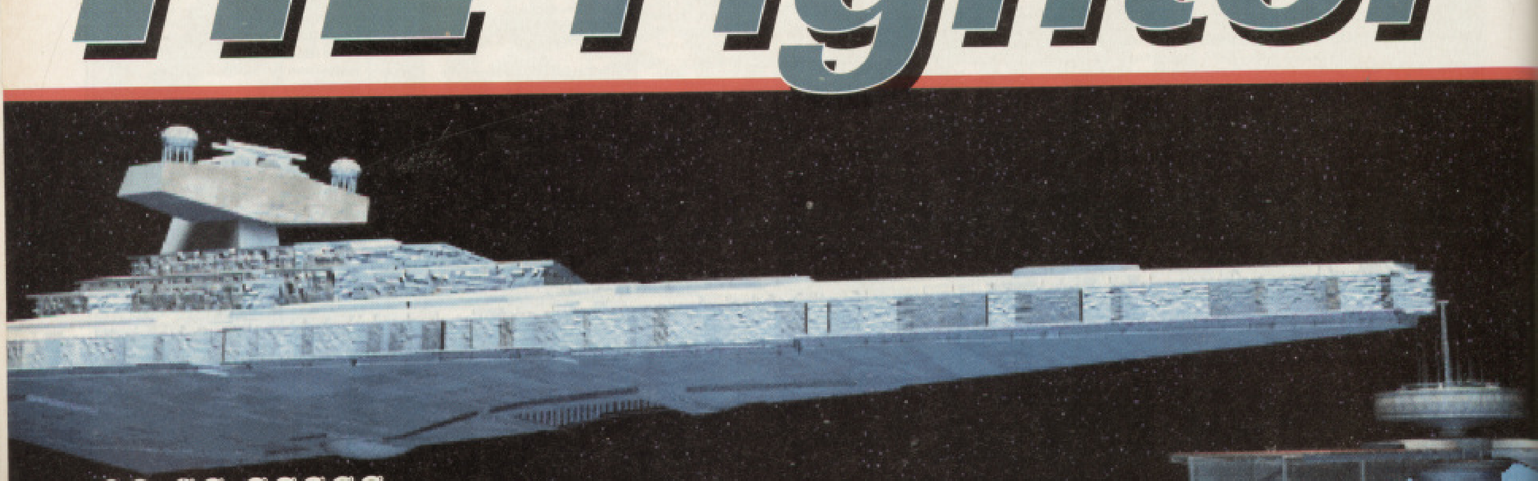


TIE Fighter offers you the chance to fly any one of five TIE-class ships — such as the TIE Advanced and the ultra-secret TIE Defender — as well as the Assault Gunboat.



SENSORS DETECT 1 NEW TRANSPORT AT 6 KM.

The game's flexible external view allows you to gawp at your spaceship from just about every conceivable angle and at any magnification. And just take a look at that Gouraud shading...



Although the designers of TIE Fighter have gone to great lengths to make the player feel comfortable with the thought of fighting for the Empire, it's still not as enticing as flying for the Rebel Alliance. It's not that I'm bothered about being a bad guy as such, it's just that pretending to be a faceless bloke wearing a black Stormtrooper's helmet doesn't have *quite* the same appeal as being Luke, Wedge or Biggs. Of course, at the end of the day it's just as satisfying blasting a Y-Wing to smithereens as a TIE Bomber, but even so...

X-Wing fans will feel instantly at home with TIE Fighter, as the game's basic structure is, to all intents and purposes, identical. Having registered for duty on a Star Destroyer, the rookie pilot enters a large concourse from where he can access combat training centres (which allow novice pilots to becomes familiar with how the various TIE ships handle), view film clips saved from previous games or enlist to take part in a battle.

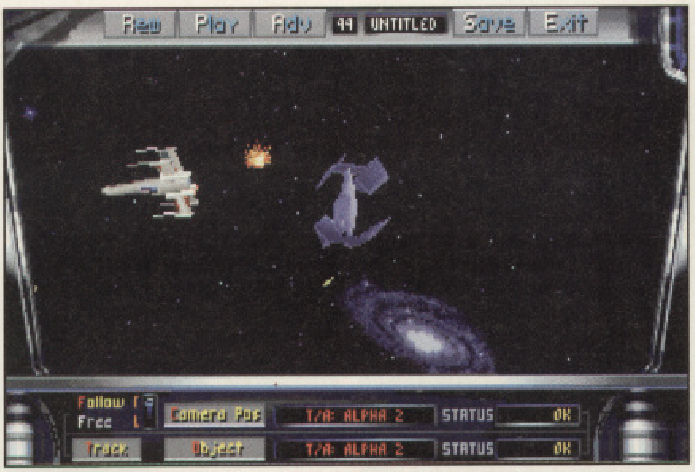
In all there are seven 'battles' for the player to participate in, each consisting of around four to six individual missions. For the sake of the plot each battle should ideally be played in sequence, but TIE Fighter allows the impatient pilot to immediately access any of the first four battles — with Battle V only becoming available after you've completed Battle IV, Battle VI only becoming available after you've completed Battle V, and so on.

Before each mission the player can call up maps outlining what his duties are, as well as interrogate the Flight Officer about specific mission details, such as the type of ship he'll be flying, what the mission's objectives are and the sort of threats he'll face.

But while this 'interactive mission briefing' (as LucasArts call it) is quite a clever idea, in practice it doesn't really work. They don't generate any 'being there' atmosphere (which was presumably their purpose) as the questions you can ask don't vary from mission to mission, and they don't tell you much that you can't deduce from the map screens anyway. In fact, after a couple of missions, you're unlikely to even bother wasting time talking to him, like I did.

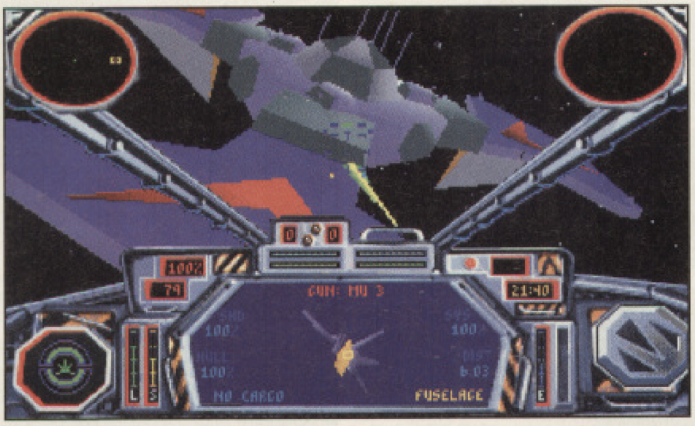
You're much better off chatting to the agents of the mysterious Secret Order Of The Emperor, who can often be seen lurking in the shadows to the rear of the briefing room. The Order is the Imperial equivalent of the Masons, a hush-hush band of elite TIE pilots incredibly loyal to the Emperor. By 'talking' to them (using an even more limited version of the system used to chat to the Flight Officers) you can get pick up some interesting gossip on the hidden power struggles within the Empire's upper echelons.

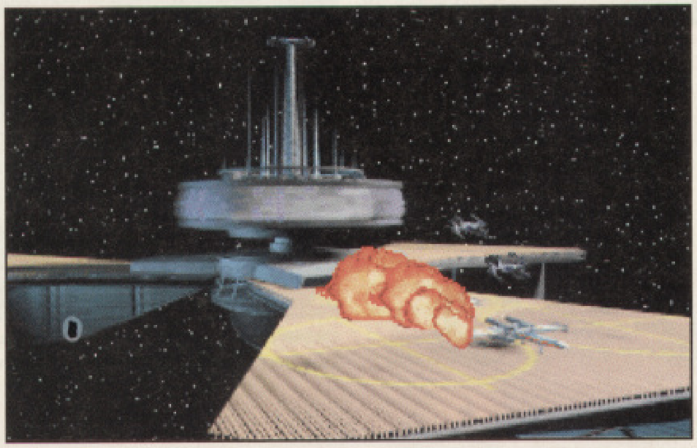
The Order will also ask you to perform tasks for them — which effectively form your optional secondary mission objectives. Should you carry them out,



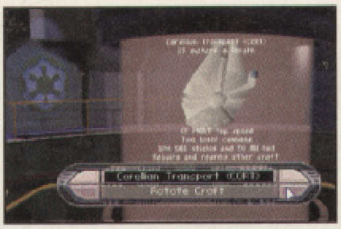
(Above) TIE Fighter's 'camera' feature lets you make in-flight movies of your dogfights which you can then save to disk and watch at your leisure.

(Below) The Assault Gunboat's cockpit looks very familiar...

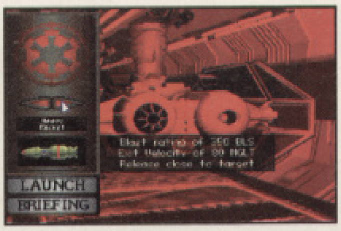




One of TIE Fighter's many cut-scenes, showing an impressive display of synchronised dive-bombing by a couple of TIE Advanceds. The Emperor, as they say, will be pleased...



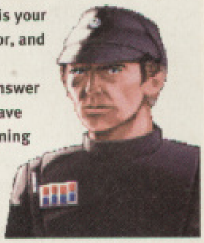
From the concourse you can enter the Tech Room, which gives you access to info on all the ships in the game.



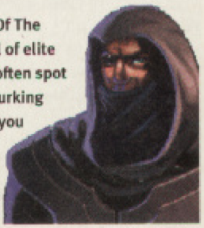
Before most missions you get to choose which missiles or bombs you want to equip your ship with.

The chain of *command*

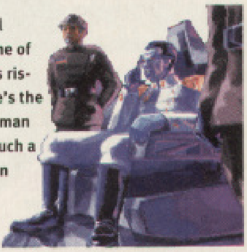
It's pays to know your boss, so get clued-up with this topper guide to the Empire's top brass.



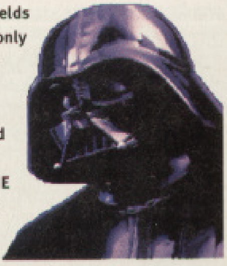
The Flight Officer is your immediate superior, and will happily (well, almost happily) answer any queries you have about the forthcoming mission via a simplistic multiple-choice conversation system, very similar those used in LucasArts' graphic adventures like Day Of The Tentacle.



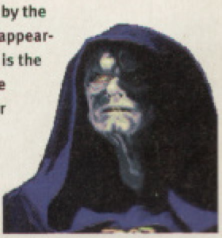
The Secret Order Of The Emperor is a cabal of elite pilots, and you'll often spot one of its agents lurking about. If they ask you to perform a task for them it's wise to try and do it, as in return they offer a fast track to fame and fortune.



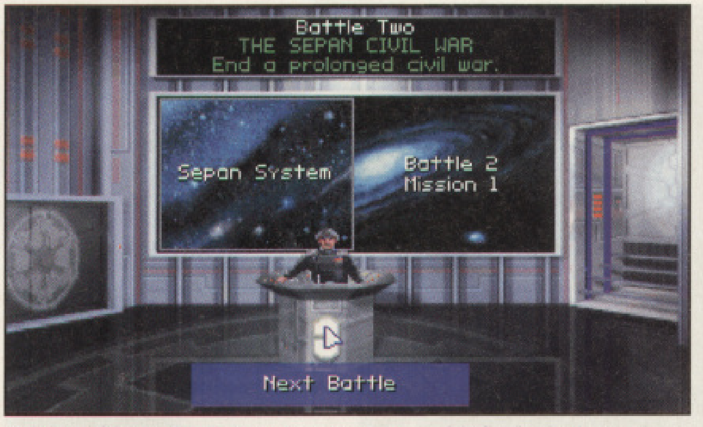
Vice Admiral Thrawn is one of the Empire's rising stars. He's the only non-human to achieve such a lofty position within the Imperial Navy, mainly because of his skill at predicting Rebel tactics with almost uncanny accuracy. This boy will go far.



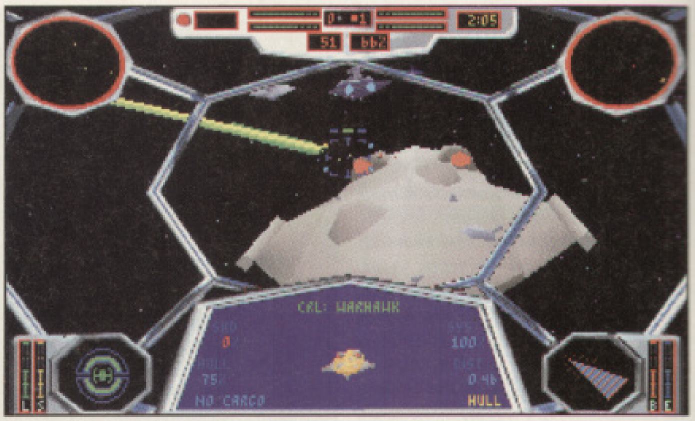
Darth Vader wields power second only to the Emperor himself. He's affectionately nicknamed 'Old Coal Scuttle Head' by the TIE pilot, although you'd be wise not to call him that to his face — unless you fancy having your windpipe crushed.



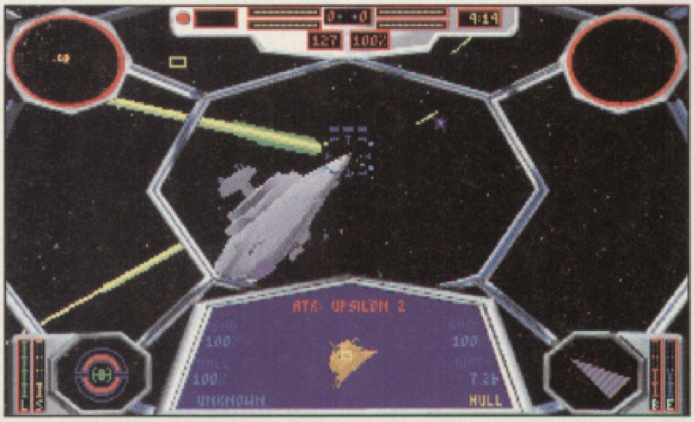
Don't be fooled by the Emperor's frail appearance — his ally is the Dark Side of The Force. You never get to meet the Emperor face-to-face but this is probably just as well because, judging by the colour of his teeth, his breath probably *stinks*.



At the start of the your TIE pilot 'career' you can access any of the first four battle campaigns, with the last three only becoming available as you prove your flying skills.



As TIE Fighter's intrigue-laden plot twists and turns, one mission you could be attacking a Rebel-controlled Calamari cruiser (above), the next one of your own Star Destroyers (below).



in return you'll receive entry into the Order and then promotion up its ranks — it's a sort of, if you will, 'secret career'.

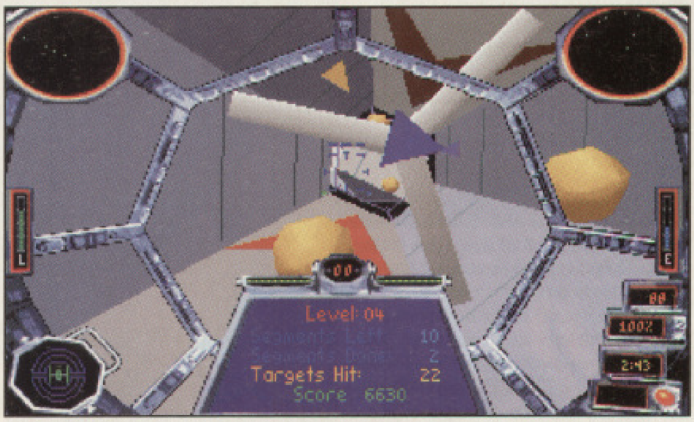
Once in space the X-Wing veteran's feeling of deja vu will doubtless persist. Most of the flight controls are identical to those in X-Wing, although there are some new ones which make dogfighting even easier than it was before, such as a key which'll match your ship's velocity to that of your target, eliminating the need to frantically juggle the speed controls, and another which brings up data on your target's damage status and current mission objectives.

Controls aside, one of TIE Fighter's most obvious advances over X-Wing is in its 3D engine which has been given a major overhaul, and now offers Gouraud shading as well as greater detailing on the ships. It looks lovely — trouble is, everything zips around so swiftly and the combat is so frenetic that you don't really get enough time to sit back and appreciate it!

Even so, the larger ships — like the Star Destroyers and the Mon Calamari cruisers — still lack sufficient surface detail to give them a real impression of size and bulk, and the little bit that there is — like gun turrets — can't be shot off anyway, which I found annoying.

Still, if this is the price to pay for TIE Fighter super-smooth and amazingly-fast 3D then I suppose I can live with it. Even on a 386 (albeit a good one) the game still updates adequately — and there's not many 3D space games you can say that about these days.

If TIE Fighter proves one thing, it's that it's not easy being bad — although it's a damn sight easier than being good. The missions, though challenging, are noticeably easier than those in X-Wing. And although things toughen up in the latter stages of the game, with the climactic missions offering a stiff

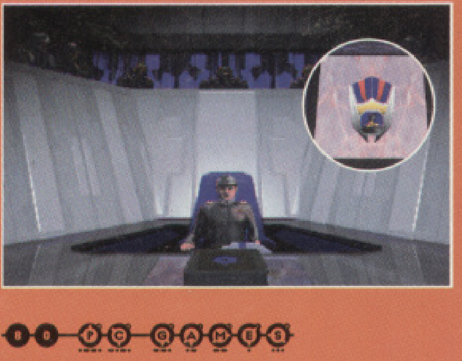


(Above) Even if you've never played X-Wing, you'll find TIE Fighter very easy to get into thanks to the many flight training missions (shown here) and combat simulations provided.

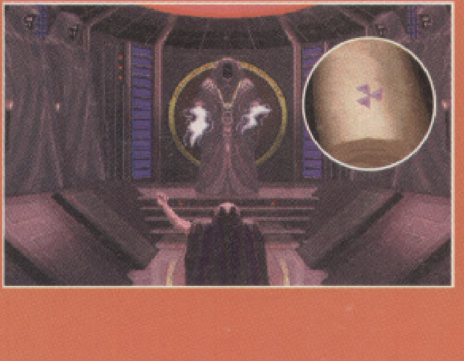
A FIGHTER'S **FATE**

In TIE Fighter, the rewards for success are great — but take care, o impetuous one, for the price of failure is even greater...

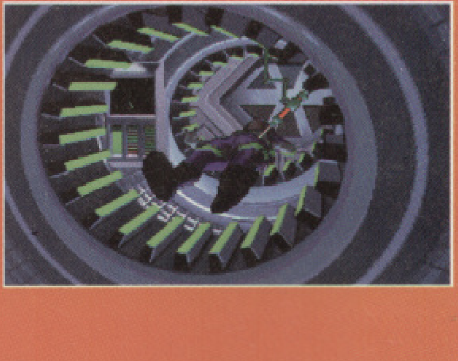
Win a whole battle's worth of missions and you'll be awarded a shiny medal. Don't you feel *proud*? Put it in the box of things you treasure so that you can show it to your kids (assuming you survive long enough to have them).

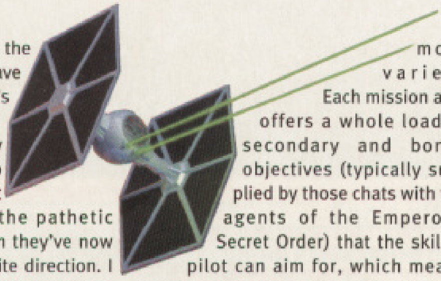


Successfully complete the tasks set for you by the mysterious agents of the Emperor's Secret Order and you'll first earn a place in the Order itself followed by promotion up its 'ranks', as shown by the tattoo burnt into your arm. All very spooky...



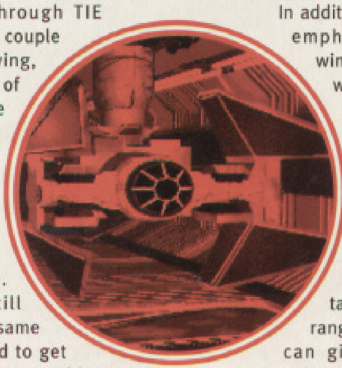
Hey, nobody said being a TIE pilot was going to be easy. Often you'll limp back from a mission with nothing to show for your valiant efforts but a bloody nose. Don't worry — the medics will soon patch you up and ship you back to the front.





enough challenge to even the hottest hot-shot pilot, I have doubts about TIE Fighter's longevity.

This is obviously LucasArts' response to those critics who said that X-Wing was too hard (the pathetic wimps). But in my opinion they've now gone too far in the opposite direction. I reckon that anyone who has played and finished X-Wing should find it relatively easy (though not quite a breeze) to get nearly halfway through TIE Fighter after only a couple of day's solid playing, even on the highest of the game's three difficulty settings. Hmmm...



Apart from this, the missions are generally far more entertaining than X-Wing's ever were. Although they still centre around the same old things you used to get up to in its predecessor — blowing up ships, identifying unmarked freighters, defending convoys, etc — they're much better structured and more varied. Each mission also offers a whole load of secondary and bonus objectives (typically supplied by those chats with the agents of the Emperor's Secret Order) that the skilled pilot can aim for, which means you've got more incentive to go back and replay missions that you might have already completed.

In addition, there's a greater emphasis on using your wingmen in TIE Fighter, who are far more intelligent than their Rebel counterparts in X-Wing — although that's not saying a great deal, as they were about as smart as a rice pudding. This, in tandem with the wider range of commands you can give them, actually makes the wingmen a useful tool rather than airborne cannon fodder — and partly contributes to TIE Fighter's easier gameplay.

TIE Fighter offers the player a huge variety of ships to fly. There are six, in fact, double the number provided in X-Wing, namely the TIE Fighter (*obviously*), the TIE Interceptor, the TIE Bomber, the TIE Advanced, the TIE Defender and the Assault Gunboat.

To be honest, cockpits and external appearances aside, there's not a great deal to distinguish between them, with the main differences laying in whether or not they have shields and the missile payloads they can carry — the feeble TIE Fighter, for example, doesn't have shields and can't carry missiles or torpedoes at all.

As I said at the outset, I came away from TIE Fighter mildly disappointed. Don't get me wrong, I *did* enjoy playing it — greatly — but having played and completed X-Wing and the Imperial Pursuit and B-Wing add-on disks I found this all a little too similar. I wouldn't go so far as to call TIE Fighter a jumped-up data disk — there are just enough enhancements to make it more than that, but still not quite enough to satisfy the high expectations I had of it.

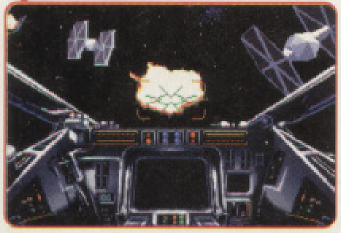
And it's this — along with the game's relative easiness, the lack of a defined ultimate goal and the other little gripes and moans I've outlined throughout this review — that have *just* denied TIE Fighter a coveted PC GAMES STAR award.

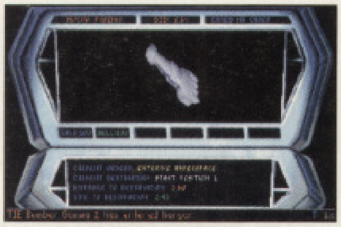
Believe me, I agonised long and hard over this decision. I'm sure that if I hadn't played X-Wing I would've rated TIE Fighter higher, but I have — and so, I suspect, have most of you. And I think that you'll come away from playing TIE Fighter feeling pretty much the same.

But there's hope yet. LucasArts has already announced that it has TIE Fighter add-on disks in the pipeline, and perhaps these will offer sufficient improvements to the basic game engine to push the game into the 90%+ region. We'll see...

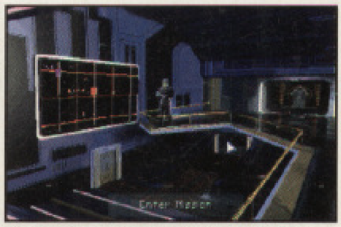
It's a bit like...

No surprises here — X-Wing. Technically TIE Fighter is far superior to its predecessor, offering vastly improved graphics, copious amounts of digitised speech and far better constructed missions with greater depth and variety. Even so, of the two games I'd still rate X-Wing as superior, mainly due to its strongly-defined end goal, the destruction of the Death Star — and end goals don't get much more strongly defined than that.





At any time during combat you can call up this screen which gives you handy info on your target's current status.



The briefing room — note the agent of the Secret Order Of The Emperor lurking in that alcove at the back .

TIE FIGHTER

VIRGIN/LUCASARTS

(081) 960 2255

£49.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

33Mhz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 15Mb of hard disk space and joystick.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Exciting and very playable all-action space combat, with a surprising degree of sophistication and depth.
- Secondary and bonus mission objectives provide a good incentive for repeated play.
- Truly excellent graphics and sound throughout.

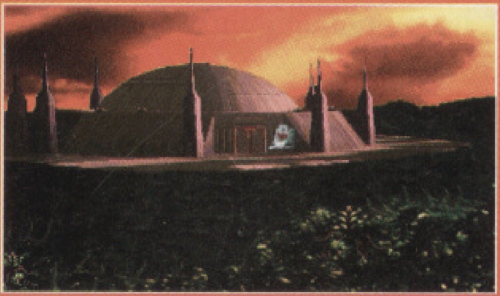
...AND THE BAD

- A little *too* similar to X-Wing for comfort.
- Likely to prove too easy for X-Wing veterans.
- Flying for the Empire doesn't have the same 'hook' as flying for the Rebellion.

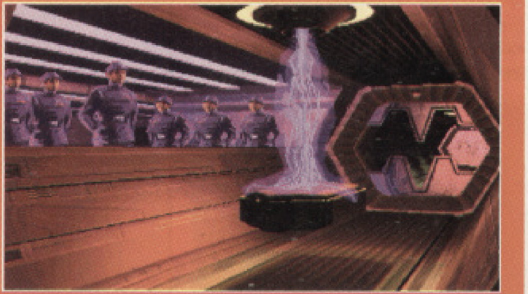
Overall

89%

As you often fight deep within enemy-held space, there's a strong chance that you'll be captured by the Rebel scum and sent to a prison planet. Fortunately, these places are quite easy to escape from, so you shouldn't be out of the action for too long.

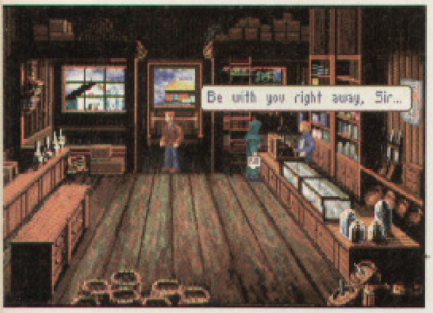


Of course, the *worst* thing that can possibly happen to a TIE pilot is death — being hit at close range by a high-energy proton torpedo tends to do nasty things to a body, you know. Ashes to ashes, funk to funky, etc, etc...



cd updates

When is a new game not a new game? When it's a floppy game that's been tarted up and re-released on CD! David Upchurch inspects the latest recruits...



Shadow Of The Comet CD

John Parker is a young astronomer who goes to visit the creepy village of Illsmouth to photograph a comet and to generally investigate any demonic shenanigans. This is where you come in, and you have three days of game time to (a) stay alive, and (b) unravel the mystery of Illsmouth.

Shadow Of The Comet makes for good adventuring. For a start, it uses a mixture of graphic styles, a suitably moody sound track and a collection of decidedly weird townsfolk to create a convincingly nasty atmosphere.

What's more, the puzzles you face over the course of the adventure are reasonably varied, and certainly tough. It's also unusual to come across an adventure game where there are so many ways to get yourself killed (usually you just end up backtracking when you guess wrong — here you end up dead).

But what does the CD version bring to the game over and above the original disk version of a year ago? Okay, well there's a Cthulhu museum, which provides a nice bit of background on the writings of Lovecraft. There is, of course, the obligatory intro and throbbing sound track, plus there's now speech throughout the game — which is welcome even if the lip-synching isn't that hot.

But what the original game needed most of all was mouse support and thankfully this is the most noteworthy addition. It is a massive improvement but, unfortunately it's still not what you'd call 'point-'n'-click' as the hero has to be led around in a rather clumsy fashion. But at least Infogrames tried...

And that's about it really. Shadow Of The Comet CD is the same atmospheric, enjoyable adventure it always was, but with a few tweaks and cosmetic improvements. Hey, what did you expect? Blood?

INFOGRAMES/IN-HOUSE

(071) 738 8199

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 1Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and soundcard.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

Overall

75%

Beneath A Steel Sky CD

Virgin claim that Beneath A Steel Sky grabs the honour of being the first UK-produced 'talkie'. Hmmm — I think AdventureSoft, the creators of Simon The Sorcerer, might have something to say about that.

Still, who *really* cares whether it is or it isn't, so long as the game is any good? Fortunately, Beneath A Steel Sky is more than merely 'good', it's excellent — and thanks to the speech in this CD version it's now even better.

Set in a dark and depressing post-Apocalyptic future, Beneath A Steel Sky casts you as Robert Foster, a square-jawed hero in the classic mould. Orphaned as a child, you've been raised to adulthood by a tribe of nomads living in the Gap, a vast desert wasteland.

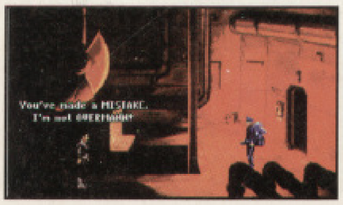
One day, however, a helicopter full of armed soldiers arrives at the tribe's camp and you are taken hostage. Their intention is to return you to the City, a vast metropolis ruled over by LINC, an all-powerful supercomputer. However, there's a malfunction, the chopper crashes and you make good your escape...

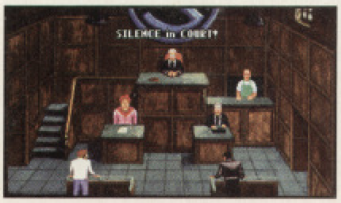
...And so the game begins. As graphic adventures go there's little to surprise you — if you've played any of LucasArts' or Sierra's recent games you'll know what to expect.

Still, it's enjoyable stuff, with its only major weakness being that it starts off a little too vaguely, with the player not really sure what his aims are. However, after some poking around things start to fall into place, and the fun begins.

As mentioned earlier the speech is excellent, with Foster's suitably world-weary American drawl complemented by more light-hearted delivery from the game's many supporting characters. If anything, some of these 'performances' are a little too over-the-top and comedic, detracting from the game's otherwise sombre mood.

Even so, this doesn't spoil what is a solid and highly-professional adventure game, and one that's well worth your consideration.





VIRGIN/REVOLUTION

(081) 960 2255

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

Overall

89%

and the rest

Privateer CD

EA/Origin £44.99

Take Elite. Add some Wing Commander-style bitmapped 3D graphics. What have you got? Origin's Privateer, more or less. On paper it seemed like the recipe for a smash hit, but the game is scuppered slightly by the lamentably small number of planets to visit and the amount of sheer hard work you have to put in to equip your ship adequately. Despite the fact that the game has dated quite badly, Privateer *is* still enjoyable and exciting to play and, considering that this CD includes the original game, the 'Righteous Fire' data disk and the dreaded speech pack all lumped together, you can't complain you're not getting value for money.

Overall: 80%

Al-Qadim CD

US Gold/SSI £35.99

Al-Qadim is yet another commendable attempt by SSI to open up the stat-heavy world of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons to the masses, with such trappings as hit points and armour classes conspicuous by their absence. In fact, if truth be told, it's more of an arcade adventure than a 'true' RPG — and a relatively easy one at that. But while it lasts it's a lot of fun, with the balance between fightin' and finkin' calculated to perfection. Sadly, as far as I could tell there's not *one* difference between Al-Qadim on CD and the floppy version reviewed last issue. Tut-tut, SSI — must try harder.

Overall: 85%

Litil Divil CD

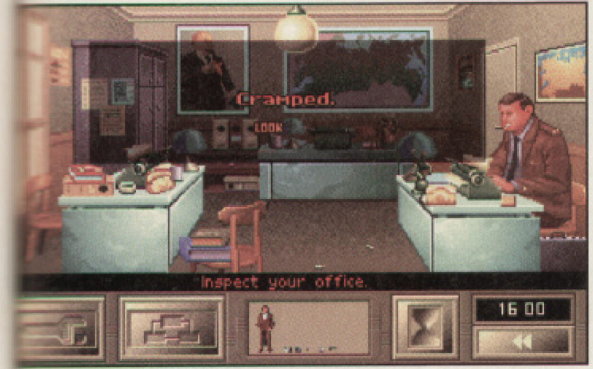
Gremlin £34.99

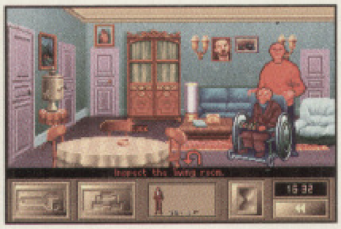
After almost three years in development, Litil Divil was finally released on floppy earlier this year to an unenthusiastic critical reception. Essentially an exploration/arcade/puzzle game, its gorgeously animated graphics couldn't conceal fundamental flaws in the gameplay. Too much of the action centres around running through dull 3D corridors littered with frequently unavoidable traps, which results in a frustrating, tedious game. For this CD version, Gremlin claim the graphics have been enhanced here and there. Well, maybe they have — although I couldn't see any marked improvements at all — but the game's major problems never lay in its graphics anyway.

Overall: 52%

Budget *Reviews*

Can't afford the latest £45 blockbuster? ***Well, why not save your money and delve deep into the bargain bucket, where this month you can find a host of classic oldies like these...***





KGB

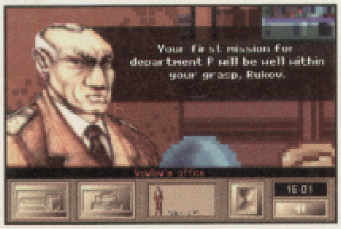
As news stories cotinue to fill our national newspapers about Mafia-style crime syndicates operating in the former USSR, threatening to expand their brand of criminality overseas, KGB assumes new topicality.

This tongue-in-cheek post-perestroika adventure casts you in the role of newly-promoted agent Maksim Mikhailovich in the KGB's recently-formed Department P. His mission is to track down and stamp out internal corruption. Almost immediately you find yourself sent to investigate the murder of a former agent, Golitsin, whose body has been dragged from a river. But you soon become enbroiled in a bigger, wider and very murky conspiracy to overthrow President Gorbachev.

The adventure's point-and-click interface is simplicity itself. All actions, questions and responses are selected from multiple-choice menus, so there's no need to type anything in. A nice touch is the 'rewind' feature which lets you to relive previous scenes and brush up on any important instructions or conversations you've had.

Intriguing and tricky, KGB — designed by Cryo, designers of forthcoming CD-ROM epics such as Dragon Lore and The Lost Eden — is a thoroughly absorbing half-serious, half-comic mystery adventure. Personally, I would have liked a more serious approach — the cartoon-style graphics detract from the atmosphere of potential menace.

Interestingly, a CD version of this game, featuring the voice-over talents of veteran actor Donald Sutherland, has been released under the name Conspiracy. But don't be fooled, after the intro sequence it's the same old version of KGB lurking underneath.


Your first mission for department P will be well within your grasp, Rukov.

THE HIT SQUAD/VIRGIN
(061) 832 6633
£14.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC
16MHz 286, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 3Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS
Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall
76%

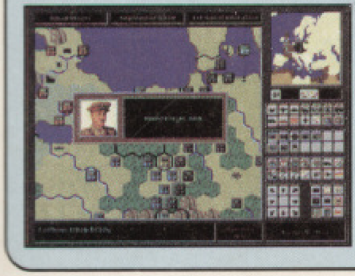
High Command CD

The setting is the Second World War in Europe, and it's your responsibility to take command of Allied land, sea and air forces. And it's not only your proud fighting forces that you have to look after — you also control and influence political and economic resources and must make the most of diplomatic offensives.

The complex game mechanics combine ground assaults and air attacks with economic elements like building production facilities and researching and developing new technology.

On the political front, you have to use your diplomatic skills to enlist support from neutral countries — or at least ensure that they don't give any favours to the enemy instead of you.

All in all, High Command is not the easiest of games to get into. With a huge 160 page manual to wade through, it's initially quite a daunting prospect. Still, if you're a budding megalomaniac, I doubt you'll let something like that get in the way of your world-conquering.



ACCOLADE/IN-HOUSE
(081) 788 0200
£17.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC
25MHz 386, VGA, 3Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS
Mouse; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

Overall
70%

Epic

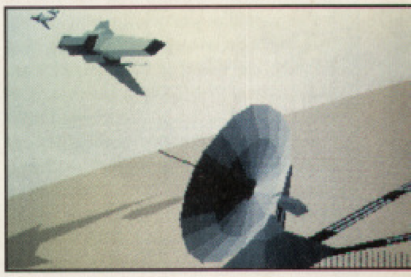
Epic is Ocean's partially successful attempt at a three-dimensional space flight simulation in the Wing Commander mould. It's good to look at but fails in the gameplay stakes.

The highly-derivative plot, mixing elements of Star Wars, Battlestar Galactica and Star Trek, involves a mass exodus from a doomed planet after its sun goes supernova which subsequently results in massive space battles as the convoy passes through alien territory in search of a new home.

Nicely animated sequences, including a very impressive intro scene and the in-between mission links, are effective and add much to the atmosphere of the game. But ultimately these only serve to heighten the sense of disappointment with the actual gameplay.

There are only eight missions to undertake and these fall roughly into one of two types, either flying 'space shotgun' for the convoy, fighting off as many attacking alien ships as possible, or venturing down onto planet surfaces to locate and destroy alien targets.

If you want a truly 'epic' space combat game, save your cash for TIE Fighter or take a look at Inferno.



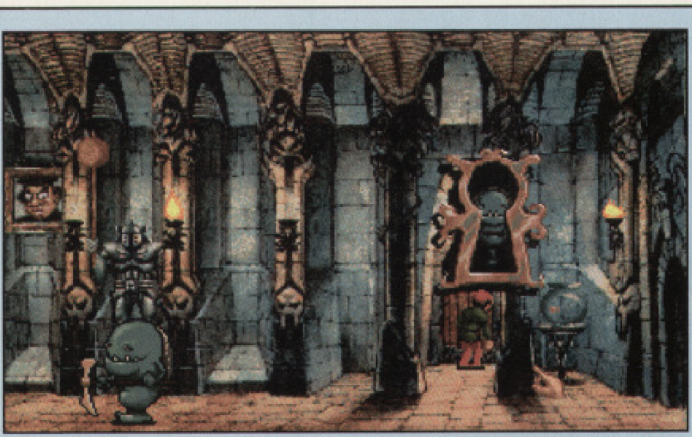
THE HIT SQUAD/OCEAN
(061) 832 6633
£14.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC
16MHz 386, VGA and 6Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS
Joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

Overall
58%

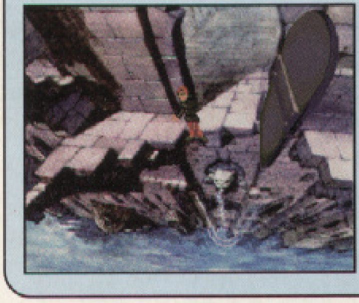
Curse Of Enchantia



There are some games which are the only word to describe them is twee. Curse Of Enchantia scores three times on the Twee-o-meter, with its twee plot, twee graphics and twee music.

You'll see what I mean when I start to explain the storyline. Basically it centres around the adventures of the mysterious yet cute Brad, who awakes one day to find himself shackled in the dungeon of an equally mysterious but not half as cute castle.

How did he get there? Who really cares? Anyway, he decides to escape and find his way home — wherever that may be. However, once he's managed to free himself, it's not long before he discovers that he's been kidnapped from his own world by an ugly hag of a witch, who needs the hapless hero as the last vital ingredient in a rejuvenating potion she's in the process of brewing. Naturally, she's none too chuffed about Brad's sudden departure and so she sends out her minions to get him back.



Of course, this being a graphic adventure, there are loads of puzzles to be solved as Brad struggles to find a way back to his own dimension. Some are easy, some logical, some plain obscure, but all are made harder by the icon controls which aren't particularly twee, just a bit cumbersome.

Clicking on the right mouse button brings up the icons, controlling speech, fighting, picking up objects, etc. Selecting the required icon and clicking the left button accesses another series of icons to continue the specific task.

This graphic interface is not nearly as refined and simple-to-use as those created by the likes of Sierra and LucasArts, and in many cases manipulating objects proves very frustrating.

In its favour Curse Of Enchantia is quite pretty, but in a twee way — and it's this endless nauseating sickly-ness that's the game's *real* curse. If you're on the look out for a graphic adventure and you like twee, fine. If not, you'll soon be crawling up the wall.

Corkers/Core Design

(0332) 297797

£12.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

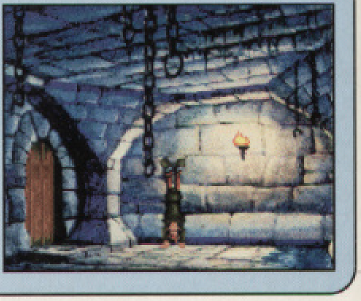
12MHz 286, VGA and 8Mb of hard disk space

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

57%



Harpoon

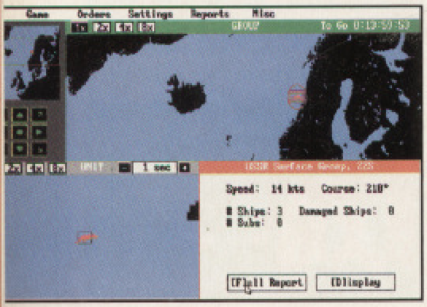
Harpoon, a highly successful naval warfare simulation, has been knocking around for some years now and has, in many ways, been very influential. It first saw the light of day back in 1980 as a boardgame designed by Larry Bond, while author Tom Clancy used many of the strategies from the game in his book The Hunt For Red October, which itself was turned into a film and then a computer game.

Harpoon finally turned up on computer back in 1989 and an updated version plus a series of new datadisks appeared in 1992. Now it makes the transition in budget form to CD-ROM.

Here you can play a NATO or USSR commander and plot and plan for supremacy in the freezing seas of the North Atlantic. With a vast arsenal of weapons to 'play' with, including surface ships, submarines and missiles, scenarios vary from single ship to multiple groups engagements, giving a wide variety of playing possibilities.

Although not the prettiest strategy game you'll ever come across, Harpoon (and its miscellaneous add-on disks that include a scenario-builder and a compendium of ship statistics) is without a doubt the most accurate and respected naval strategy game available.

If you're a keen strategist and missed this game the first time around, Harpoon will keep you thoroughly absorbed for weeks, if not months, on end. But if money's not a problem, you should really check out the far superior sequel, Harpoon 2, which you'll find reviewed on page 68.



Speed: 14 kts Course: 210°

Ships: 3 Damaged Ships: 0
Subs: 0

Digital Integration

(0276) 684959

£17.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

16MHz 286, CGA and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

80%

Body Blows

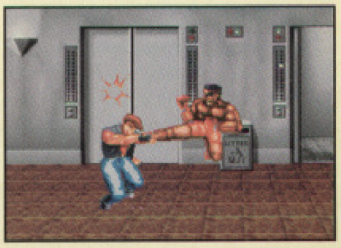
Body Blows was once touted as the best beat-'em-up available for the PC and although that accolade is now probably held by Mortal Kombat, Body Blows still bears up fairly well.

The format is very familiar: pick a character, learn all the moves — including the secret power plays — and than bash, batter, maim and maul a succession of increasingly difficult opponents against a variety of colourful backdrops.

In all there are 10 fighters to despatch, all of whom have a wide variety of punches, kicks and spins. Each also has a special move; Loray, for instance, can unleash a death-dealing curiosity called the Flame Of Buddha, while the only female character in the game, Maria, instills instant terror with her Flamenco Fury.

Joystick control is recommended and although It is possible for two players to confront each other using the keyboard, the sheer number of keys needed to produce decent attacks will result in broken fingers and twisted wrists. However, in one player mode on the keyboard, it's just about possible to get a good brawl going. There's also a Tournament mode which allows up to eight people to take part in a monster mega-ruck.

The animation of the fighters appears a little stiff at times and the background music quickly becomes nerve-shredding, but if you're in the market for some light-hearted, but no-nonsense arcade violence, at its new budget price Body Blows is definitely worth checking out.



Team 17/In-House

(0924) 385903

£14.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

16MHz 286, VGA and 1.5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

65%

Mike Ditka's Ultimate Football

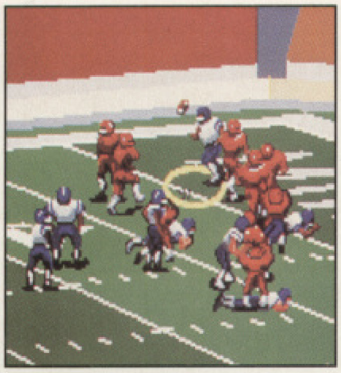
43... 22... Hut! Hut! Hut! Despite its age, Mike Ditka's Ultimate Football is still a damned fine American Football sim and its smooth, colourful and very impressive multiple-view play sequences are still comparable to anything else around today.

The game features two distinct game styles; coaching or player/coaching. Like a football management game, the coaching option allows you to dictate play and strategy from the bench via a set of easy-to-use and understandable menus. Then you watch the result played out by the computer on-screen.

Choosing which play to make is easy. Both offense and defense are given about four play formations, each allocated a letter, and pressing the letter on the keyboard selects that play.

The player/coach option allows you to get in on the sharp end of the action. After the plays and strategies have been decided, you get to control the quarterback or the defensive tackle, depending on the current state of play. Normal rules of gridiron apply and if you manage to make any impressive plays, there are even action replays for you to enjoy.

Although now superceded by Accolade's SVGA sequel, Unnecessary Roughness, this is still worth a look.



The Hit Squad/Accolade

(061) 832 6633

£12.99 Out Now

Minimum Spec

16MHz 286, EGA and 3Mb of hard disk space.

Also Supports

Joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

Overall

60%

Star Control & Star Control II CD

Star Control and Star Control II were highly-rated when they were released in 1991 and 1992. And in this CD compendium, they represent remarkable value for money. Both are space strategy/action epics, with the sequel having a science fiction role-playing element added for good measure.

Mankind is facing oblivion (again), this time at the hands of the Ur-Quan Hierarchy. These unfriendly aliens are intent of enslaving everyone. It's up to you to join the Alliance Of Free Stars and defend the galaxy against the invading armies of darkness.

You play a veteran space commander in which you attempt to liberate friendly aliens and planets from the tyranny of Ur-Quan slavery. The game universe contains more than 500 star systems and 3,000 planets. But you'll need more than just shoot-'em-up skills and battle tactics to triumph — there are 18 different alien races to interact with, there's a fair bit of diplomatic chatting to be done as well.

The Star Control duo aren't the most attractive games you'll ever play, but with strategy and Asteroids-style gameplay, there's a lot of depth hidden beneath the surface.

Accolade/In-house

(081) 788 0200

£19.99 Out Now

Minimum Spec

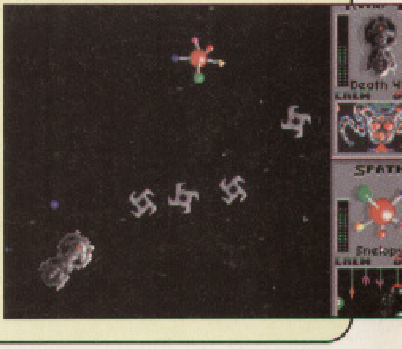
20MHz, 386, VGA and CD-ROM drive.

Also Supports

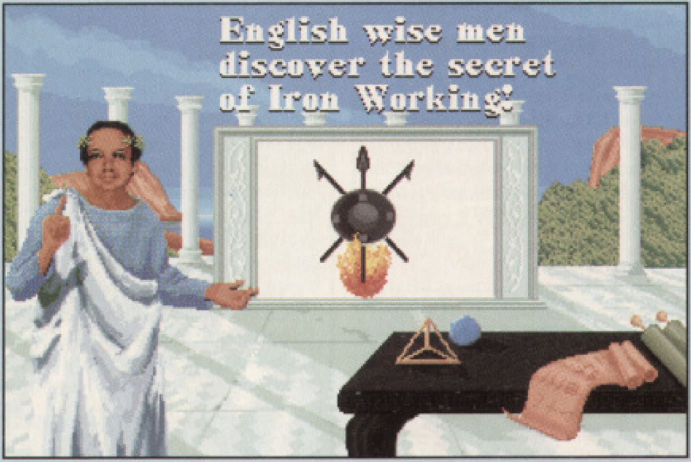
Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Thunderboard soundcards.

Overall

73%



GAME
ORDERS
ADVISORS
WORLD
CIVILOPEDIA



Sid Meier Edition CD

The sheer scope and detail of 'god games' can been totally daunting and overwhelming. Civilization and Railroad Tycoon Deluxe, the two games in this compilation, are no exception. There's no instant gratification here — you have to put a lot of effort in, but the rewards can be immensely satisfying.

Of the two Railroad Tycoon Deluxe is probably the more accessible. Basically you get to play with a huge digital trainset in the 'Golden Age Of Railroads', laying down tracks, building stations, coping with competitors and disasters, exploiting local resources such as coal and timber, balancing the books and, hopefully, building up a huge business empire — that or going bust.

It should be an essential management training tool for Railtrack bosses.

And Civilization is ideal training for would-be dictators, powermongers or megalomaniacs. You start out as the leader of a wandering tribe which must settle, establish a city and finally expand your realm of influence, initiating a long, slow and hard climb to reach the pinnacle of civilization.

War, famine, fire, flood, corruption, revolution, cars and space ships — all human life is here for you to meddle with. You have to carefully develop your leadership skills, business acumen and diplomacy to survive. You even get the chance to build the Seven Wonders of the World. Colossus anyone?

And there are no shortcuts to the top. You can't, for instance, invent the atom bomb in the Middle Ages. That can't happen until your civilization has developed a knowledge and experience of physics and science.

It's a breath-taking achievement of at times bewildering complexity and depth. The amount of effort,thought and historical research that has gone into the game is mightily impressive.

Neither Railroad Tycoon Deluxe or Civilization are that interesting graphically, and they might seem a little dated. But it doesn't matter. With this compilation you really get value for money — two games (£39.99 each), plus lavish and highly detailed manuals which are in parts entertaining and informative reads in their own right.

All in all, it's a real feel good package — especially for control freaks.

MicroProse/Sid Meier

(0454) 326532

£29.99 Out Now

Minimum Spec

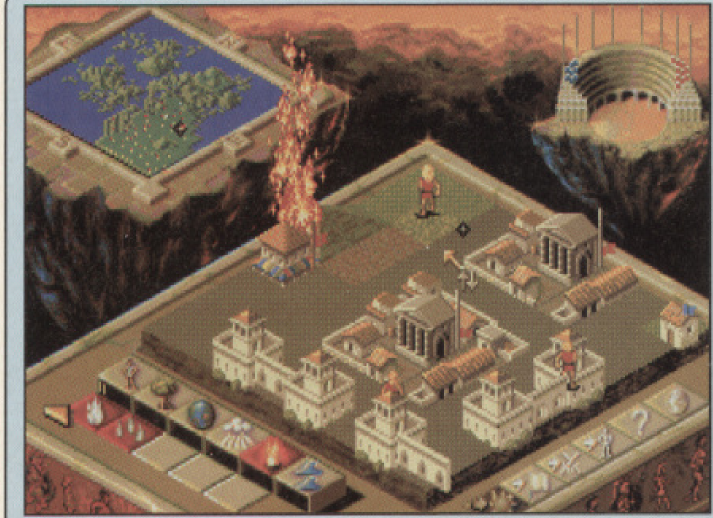
16MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

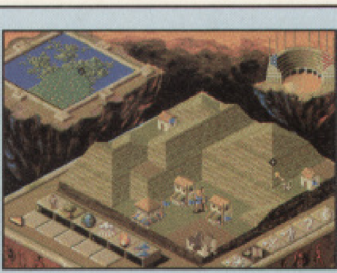
Also Supports

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

85%





THE HIT SQUAD/BULLFROG

(061) 832 6633

£14.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

16MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 4Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

90%

Populous 2

Is this possibly the god game of all god games? In Populous 2, created by Bullfrog, whose Theme Park is currently storming the charts, you play the illegitimate son of Zeus who, to gain acceptance as a true god, must undertake the trials of the Olympians.

Your dominion is an isometric-3D world populated by your adoring faithful. Unfortunately, there is a rival god with an equally loyal and fanatical following. Your goal is simply to gain control of each level — of which there about 1,000 — by wiping out the opposition. Simplicity itself, eh?

Instructions to your people cannot be made directly — they have to be encouraged, cajoled or manipulated into performing certain actions, which you do by altering their environmental and climatic conditions.

In simple terms, if by divine intervention you create flat plains this will encourage your followers to set up home, expand their settlements and increase the population.

And this is a good thing, because the more people you have in your 'tribe', the more powerful a god you become. As your following grows, you earn the ability to cause all manner of nasty natural and not-so-natural disasters, such as mighty whirlwinds, devastating firestorms, ravaging plagues and so on, which you can rain down on the heads of those mortals foolish enough not to believe in you.

Before each game you get to choose the look of your god using a 'photofit'-style face editor, and even this has an effect on play. A warlike visage could prompt your opponents to behave more aggressively, while a more ambivalent or thoughtful appearance can have a moderating effect.

Ultimately demanding and totally rewarding, Populous 2 is a PC classic and essential to any good games collection. Often imitated but never bettered, Populous 2 is digital addiction. Great!

Supremacy

Supremacy is a vast single-player space strategy and trading game, originally touted as Virgin's attempt to emulate the success of Elite.

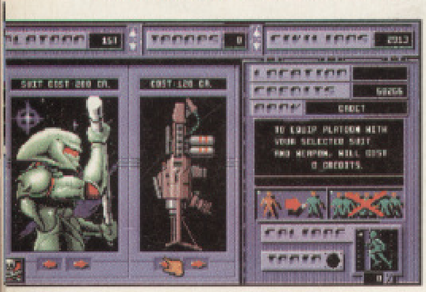
The player's ultimate goal is the economic and military domination of four planetary systems and requires that you bring your management skills to bear in governing your people, organising farming, producing weapons, training troops, developing military strategies, planning battles and so on.

But things are far from easy, because in the other three planetary systems there are rival alien commanders, all cunningly controlled by the computer, who are simultaneously plotting your ignominious downfall.

The game is mainly icon-driven with very little need to resort to the keyboard and although, at first, the number of icons may appear to be a little overwhelming, the interface is easy to pick up and they soon make sense.

With none of the 3D graphical splendour that made Elite such a success, Supremacy places its emphasis on strategy and it takes a well-worked plan to defeat the enemies and triumph. The universe is a harsh place and these bad-guys are particularly unforgiving.

So, while neither as successful or indeed as good as Elite, Supremacy nevertheless offers a vast arena in which to display your delusions of grandeur and world domination. And it's very reasonably priced too.



TO EQUIP PLATOON WITH YOUR SELECTED SUIT AND WEAPON, WILL COST 0 CREDITS.

THE HIT SQUAD/VIRGIN

(061) 832 6633

£12.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

16MHz 286, CGA and 4Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

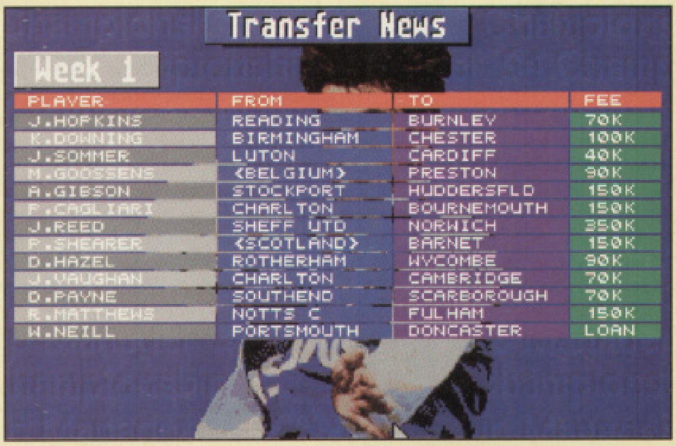
73%

World Cup Year 94

Just as the World Cup ends we received this four-game compilation called World Cup Year '94 which, curiously, has nothing at all to do with the World Cup at all — the only link to the famous footballing competition is a giveaway World Cup '94 Wall Chart detailing the fixtures (not that that's a lot of use now).

But what we do have are four football games, three of which — Goal, Striker and Sensible Soccer — are so obviously similar in design and concept to each other that you wonder why anybody would really want them all. True, each offers thoroughly enjoyable, fast action, thrills and spills, edge-of-the-seat, stick-it-in-the-net fun, but it's the PC GAMES team's favourite time-waster Sensible Soccer which easily gets the vote as the best of the bunch. Trouble is, can there be many people remotely interested in computer soccer who haven't already got a copy of it?

That leaves the fourth game, Championship Manager 93, a football management simulation, to hold the side up. It gives you control over team selection, transfers, team training, tactics and boardroom in-fights. It also



Transfer News

Week 1

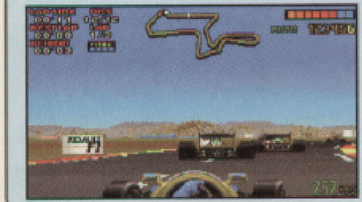
PLAYER	FROM	TO	FEE
J.HOPKINS	READING	BURNLEY	70K
K.DOWNING	BIRMINGHAM	CHESTER	100K
J.SOMMER	LUTON	CARDIFF	40K
M.GOOSSENS	<BELGIUM>	PRESTON	90K
A.GIBSON	STOCKPORT	HUDDERSFLD	150K
P.CAGLIARI	CHARLTON	BOURNEMOUTH	150K
J.REED	SHEFF UTD	NORWICH	350K
P.SHEARER	<SCOTLAND>	BARNET	150K
D.HAZEL	ROTHERHAM	WYCOMBE	90K
J.VAUGHAN	CHARLTON	CAMBRIDGE	70K
D.PAYNE	SOUTHEND	SCARBOROUGH	70K
R.MATTHEWS	NOTTS C	FULHAM	150K
W.NEILL	PORTSMOUTH	DONCASTER	LOAN

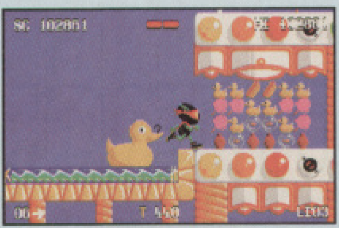
CD-3 CD

A three-game CD compilation featuring Lotus: The Ultimate Challenge, Nigel Mansell's World Championship and Zool for under thirty quid sounds like good VFM, doesn't it? Well, yes and no.

Zool is the star of the pack. Promoted as Gremlin's answer to Sonic, Zool made its debut on the PC in the summer of 1993 after chart-topping runs on other formats. It reaped similar success on PC, but never remotely threatened Sonic's supremacy. It's standard 'blast the baddies and collect the goodies' stuff, but it's carried out with some flair and style none-the-less.

Gremlin's PR hype goes into overdrive for Lotus, claiming that every person born in the past 2,000 years could have a different track to race on in this game as, in all, there are more than three trillion racing scenarios. All very well, but can you imagine the wait until it's your turn to play?

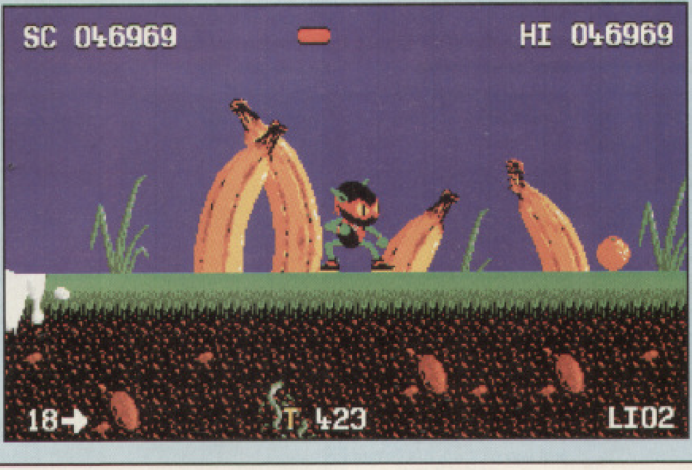




What you get is a choice of three cars — Esprit, Elan or M200 concept car — and a selection of 13 racing scenarios, either against the clock or over a full championship season. And when you get bored of the supplied courses you can create your own with the track designer. It's all wrapped up with reasonable graphics, a nice sense of speed, a choice of race music and the emphasis on fun.

The compilation's final offering takes you back to1992 and Nigel Mansell's glory days as F1 World Motor Racing Champion. Here you can take part in the full 1992 season, racing over 16 tracks, trying to emulate Nige's skill. The game was originally reviewed as a no-frills, arcade racer which promised much but didn't really deliver. Sadly, the intervening years haven't changed that.

All in all, then, not a bad set of games, but they're each getting on a bit now and beginning to show their age.



GREMLIN/IN-HOUSE

(0742) 753423

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

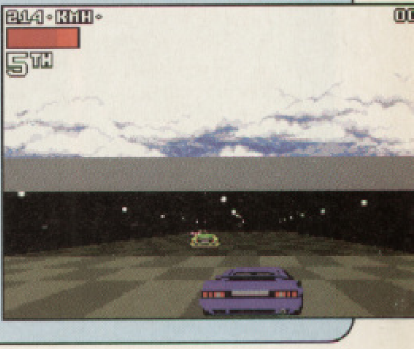
25MHz 386, VGA and CD-ROM drive.

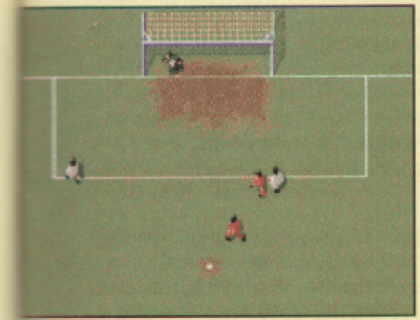
ALSO SUPPORTS

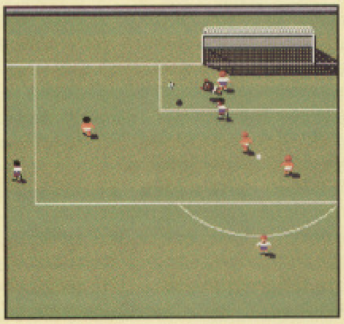
Joystick; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

Overall

73%







allows you ample opportunities to mutter "The boy done good, Des." This version also includes data for the forthcoming 1994 season (although not the six points that Spurs have been deducted) and so should be bang up to date. After three action/fun simulations, it was quite a refreshing change to play this — the only downside was that I couldn't afford to sign up Romario or Marcio Santos for Barnet.

As an added 'bonus' there's also a demo of Empire Soccer 94, which does have a specific World Cup feature. This game is already on sale and it received a glowing 63% rating in the last issue of PC GAMES.

As a total package this compilation offers good overall value — but do you really need three fairly similar soccer sims to make your life complete?

EMPIRE/VARIOUS

(081) 343 7337

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 9Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

70%

Test Drive III: The Passion

Test Drive III: The Passion is coming up to four years old now and time has treated it quite kindly. Okay, so the faint engine noise lost under the annoying music sounds like a demented gnat rather than a V12 engine, but you can live with that.

In Test Drive III you get the chance to test drive three street-legal dream cars — the Chevrolet CERV III, the Lamborghini Diablo and the Pininfarina Mythos, all exotic names with equally exotic price tags. But here you can get behind the wheel for a mere £12.99.

From the main screen you get to select the car you wish to put through its paces, the course you want to drive, and the type of test you want to put yourself and the car through. You can either race against the clock, against two computer-controlled cars or up to three people.

In the cockpit of the car things are kept fairly simple. Apart from the steering wheel there's a rear view mirror, clock and compass, speedometer and gear lever.

Winning or losing is not measured merely in terms of merely who is the fastest — you have to watch out for the cops who will punish your speeding, and bad driving can get you a bad reputation.

Overall, Test Drive III: The Passion is still worth taking for a spin.

THE HIT SQUAD/ACCOLADE

(061) 832 6633

£12.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

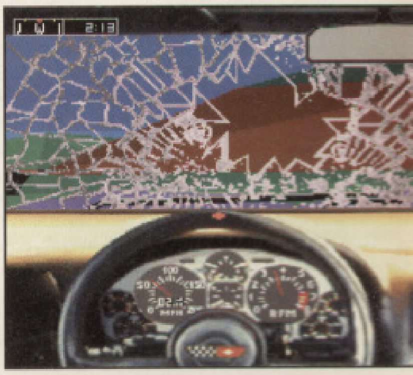
16MHz 286, EGA and 1Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall

69%

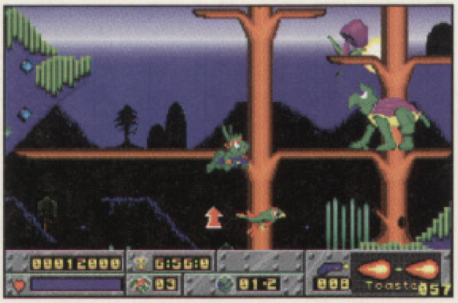


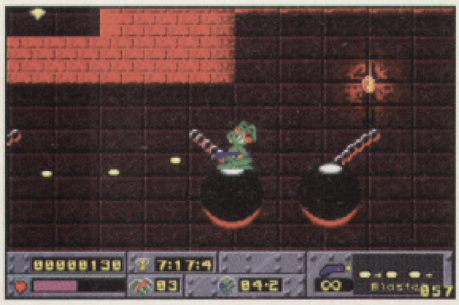
Yours... for

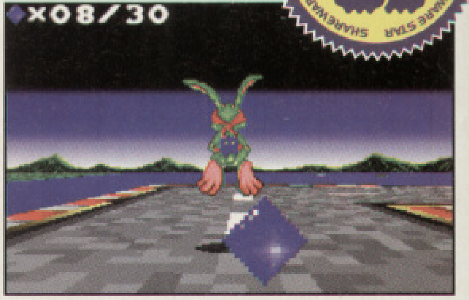
Not all of us can afford to blow £45 every two weeks on a top commercial game, so sit back, relax and read on as Dean Evans puts the latest Shareware releases through their paces.

Shareware programs are not just crap EGA arcade games knocked up by some bloke in his garage (although I've seen some that look like they have been). If you look hard enough there are some highly impressive games to be found lurking in Shareware libraries and on bulletin boards across the country.

Most, if not all of them, will cost you less than a fiver. So, for slightly less than the cost of Lean Cuisine Lasagne (plus a Delia Smith Microwave cookery book into the bargain), here's what's on offer this month...







Jazz Jackrabbit

Epic Megagames

If there's a prize for the fastest, brightest platform game around, it has to go to Jazz Jackrabbit, the new title from Epic Megagames. In fact, if there's a prize for 'platform game that most resembles Sonic the Hedgehog', then this game would probably nab that honour as well.

In Jazz Jackrabbit you control an athletic green rabbit who you must guide over numerous meany-filled levels, running, jumping, spinning and shooting anything that moves. Anything else that doesn't move — i.e weapon power-ups, bonuses and health icons — you can pick up. It's extremely simple.

There's a plot of sorts too, something involving an evil Turtle Lord, a kidnapped girlfriend and a planet called Carrotus. But it isn't really important. All you really have to know is that Jazz Jackrabbit is probably the best platform game I've seen so far this year. It's better than Zool 2 and better than Cool Spot. The sheer speed of the game is worth your fiver alone.

Jazz Jackrabbit is one of those rare games that had me well and truly hooked after only a couple of minutes. So, if you're looking for a Sonic clone, a game with springs, secret rooms and even a 3D bonus level, then I heartily suggest you give your local Shareware library a buzz and order it now.

I know that most of you usually look at the Shareware reviews and ignore them completely, but I recommend this game highly. With 256-colour graphics, a huge number of worlds and end-of-level guardians to contend with, Jazz Jackrabbit is, dare I say it, even more fun than Sonic. Bloody marvellous.

Contact: Transend Services Ltd (0274) 622228.

OVERALL 93%

Mystic Towers

Apogee Software

At first glance Apogee's new arcade adventure game, Mystic Towers, is a dead ringer for Core Design's Heimdall 2. Both games use a similar isometric-3D perspective and gameplay which centres around guiding a hero through a number of locations, picking up objects and vanquishing enemies. Oh, and there are a few rudimentary puzzles thrown in there as well. Involving levers, usually.

But where Heimdall 2 involved Vikings, furry hats and swordplay, Mystic Towers is a much gentler affair. Using either the mouse, keyboard or joystick, you take control of the mild-mannered Baron Baldric, a man charged with ridding the local tower of malevolent monsters and evil entities.

In the tower — and in the registered version there are ten of them to contend with — the idea is simply to kill all the monsters and to destroy the evil Wizard's monster generator. Sounds simple enough, but with traps, poison tiles and fire-spitting, mechanical dinosaurs (well, that's what they looked like to me) to battle, it all becomes very challenging indeed.

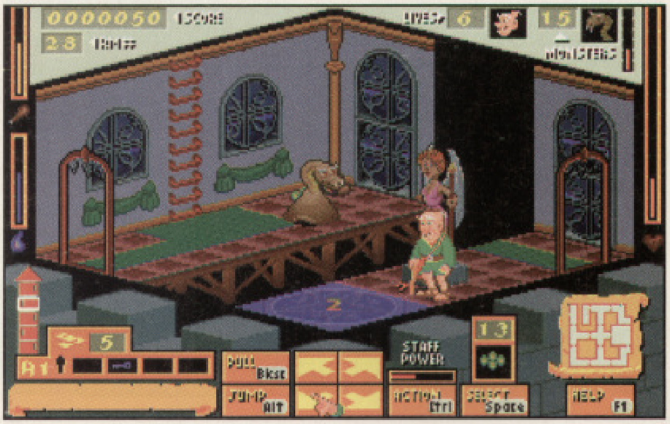
As Baldric hobbles bravely around the corridors of the tower he can also pick up various objects, like keys and food, plus miscellaneous spells like heal, teleport and fireball which help him overcome the puzzles and enemies. Lastly, there are bombs lying about that Baldric must use to demolish the monster generator on each level.

All in all, Mystic Towers is an enjoyable game. Like most Apogee releases it has a friendly on-line help facility and, with blatant hints dotted about as well, it practically grabs you by the hand and leads you through the opening locations. On the negative side the icon-based control system is extremely fiddly and takes some getting used to (especially the mouse interface), but once you're confident swapping between the move, jump and action options, it's a game that will hold your attention for, ooh a week at the very least.

Obviously, this being a Shareware release, Mystic Towers isn't as polished as Heimdall 2 but as there aren't many games like this on the PC and if you like a dash of arcade with your adventuring, why not take a look at this?

Contact: Transend Services Ltd (0274) 622228.

OVERALL 85%



less than a Fiver

The Multi-Dimensional Thief

Electric Sheep Entertainment

“You are in a small room with a low roof. There are doorways to the south and east...” And with these few nostalgia-inducing words so begins Electric Sheep's first Shareware game, The Multi-Dimensional Thief, probably the gaming world's only Super VGA 'text' adventure.

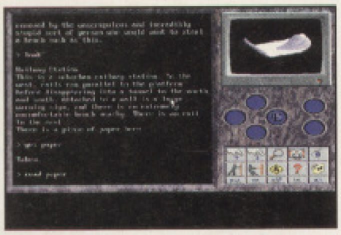
It's a strange combination. On the one hand you have an old-fashioned text interface and an intelligent parser that accepts phrases like “Use hole with the door” and “Examine the aquarium” and, on the other, the text box is edged with a nice, marbled frame and most of the objects are shown as tiny SVGA illustrations.

As for the plot — and text adventures were notorious for having particularly tortuous ones — it centres around your efforts to get into the Multi-Dimensional Thieves' Guild. Entry into this prestigious and elite circle is limited, but a mysterious bloke in a cloak is prepared to offer you a provisional membership if you pass a simple test.

I'll say no more than this, I'm afraid, because if you want to discover the test for yourself I'm not going to be the one to spoil it for you. Suffice it to say, The Multi-Dimensional Thief is a very difficult game and, if you've become complacent playing all these 'Use object A with object B'-style graphical adventures, this game will come as something of a surprise.

Contact: Electric Sheep, Box 731, Toowong, Australia 4066.

OVERALL 82%



Nitemare-3D

Gray Design Associates

Wolfenstein 3D has got a lot to answer for. Ever since it burst onto the Shareware scene, libraries and bulletin board systems alike have been swamped with look-a-likes and Wolf-wannabes. Nitemare-3D is one such game, a first-person-perspective arcade adventure, that dumps Nazis for B-movie horror extras and machine guns for magic wands.

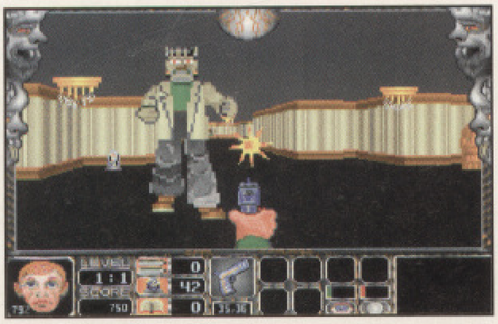
In the best traditions of horror scriptwriting, your childhood sweetheart has been kidnapped by the evil East European scientist (aren't they always?), Dr Hammerstein. Not only has the fiend imprisoned her in the depths of his labyrinthine mansion, but he also plans to perform dastardly experiments on her, no doubt involving complicated electrical apparatus and a big bolt of lightning.

And that's pretty much all you need to know. The gameplay, like Wolfenstein, involves running around a maze of corridors, shooting mummies, monsters, witches, etc, while picking up health potions and various helpful items like ID cards and keys. There are also secret panels leading to bonus rooms and an abundance of weaponry including plasma guns, rifles and pistols.

Like Wolfenstein, the graphics are a far cry from next generation 3D games like Doom and, although it's fun for a while, I got the impression that Nitemare-3D wasn't actually very difficult. Still, if you're desperate for another first-person 3D game to add to your first-person 3D game collection, this really isn't as bad as it looks. It's not a patch on Wolfenstein though.

Contact: David P. Gray, G.D Associates, P.O. Box 333, Northboro, MA 01532, USA.

OVERALL 67%



Depth Dwellers

TriSoft

It's hardly surprising that after the mammoth success of ID Software's blood-fest Doom, originality has leapt screaming out of windows everywhere and game designers have started leaping onto the first-person-perspective, shoot-'em-up bandwagon.

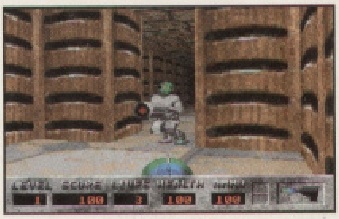
Depth Dwellers, by US company TriSoft, is a case in point. You have been contacted by the Council of Depth Dwellers, imprisoned miners who want you to free the world of Ora from the tyrannical rule of the Ri. And, of course, in the noble tradition of first-person blasts, they also want you to accomplish this end single-handed and armed with nothing but a very small pistol.

With its Doom-style high resolution backgrounds and controls and blocky, low resolution Blake Stone characters, I'm afraid to say Depth Dwellers has neither speed, charm or sophistication. It's slow and sluggish, lacking the fluidity of movement that both Doom and even Wolfenstein provide.

Although I couldn't get excited about this game at all, if you buy the registered version, you can play the whole thing in stereoscopic-3D.

Contact: TriSoft Software, P.O. Box 83, Friendswood, Texas 77540, USA.

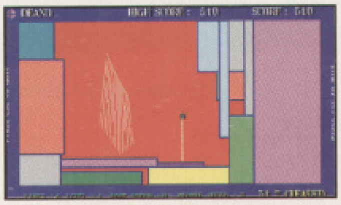
OVERALL 60%



Gotcha!

Don Herring

Gotcha! is a reworking of the classic game Qix, where the aim of the game was to block off parts of the game area without your cursor or indeed any part of the box you were drawing, being hit by the spark that bounced around in the middle. When you covered a certain percentage of the area with coloured blocks, say 50%, the level then ended. The further you progressed, the greater the area that you had to block off.



Gotcha! recreates this gameplay exactly, and includes a meany that attacks you if you're too slow and hidden mines and bombs on later levels.

Obviously, this game can't boast great graphics as one of its plus points and it seems ludicrously simplistic by today's standards. But give it a few minutes and you'll discover that it's frighteningly addictive and requires a fair degree of thought and skill. Gotcha! won't change your life, but it may well distract you from the rigours of it for a couple of hours.

Contact: Don Herring, 407 Linden Lane, LaPlata, MD 20646, USA.

OVERALL 71%

Where can I get this lovely **Shareware?**

If you'd like more information, on any of the products mentioned above, in addition to the direct mail addresses, here is a list of some of the friendly Shareware libraries that you might try first. Ask them to send you a catalogue of their games or check this magazine for adverts.

Transend Services Ltd
(0274) 622228

PD Soft (0702) 466933

Testware UK Ltd
(0423) 886415

Shareware libraries often charge different prices for the same games so try to shop around to find the best deal.

You'll usually find that you'll pay by the disk, not by the game. This means that if one disk costs £2 then a game like Raptor (which comes on three disks) will set you back £6. Postage & Packing is normally included and, if it isn't, go somewhere where it is.

If you've got a modem, why not try giving the following BBS systems a call. Initial on-line time is free but for more access most systems will charge you an annual subscription fee.

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(0839) 661199/88/77

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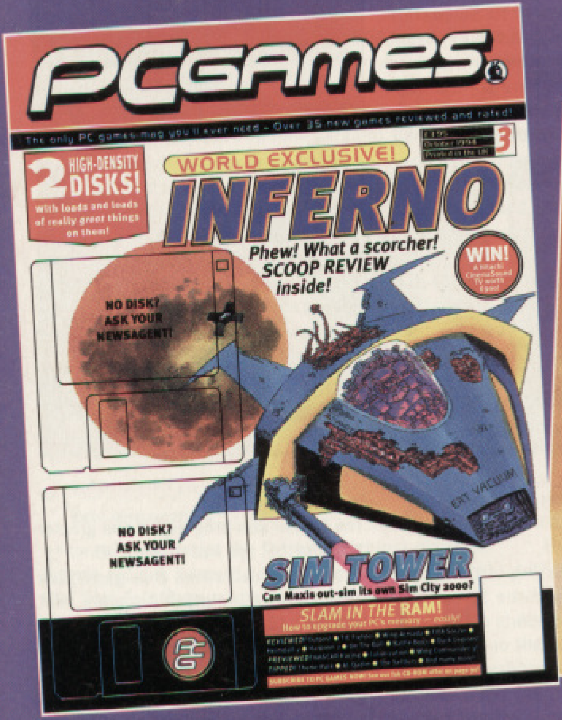
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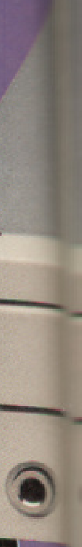

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(Actually, there is one catch — this offer is open only to UK residents. Sorry.)

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What is there to say? As you probably know, it's the best darn magazine about games on the PC called PC GAMES that human money can buy. Inside every barn-storming issue you'll find the...

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- **Best tips** — Easy-to-follow guides and solutions to the games you were playing yesterday!
- **Best features** — When we can be bothered to get off our backsides and do them!
- **Best jokes** — Subject to availability!

Tell me more about the CD games...

Pagan: Ultima VIII

From the brain of Richard Garriott comes the latest in the massively-successful Ultima saga! Guide the Avatar across the mystical island of Pagan in search of his destiny! Beautiful graphics, superb playability and an intriguing plot make this an essential game for anyone with a thirst for adventure!

MINIMUM SPEC: 486, VGA and 4Mb RAM.

Space Hulk

An intense action/strategy game with more than a few similarities to the movie Aliens! Command a squad of rock-hard Marines as they penetrate the alien-infested bowels of vast spaceships. So scary you may well pap your pants.

MINIMUM SPEC: 386, VGA and 4Mb RAM.

Pagan: Ultima VIII or Space Hulk — whichever you pick, you'll have a whale of a time. And both are specially enhanced for CD-ROM.

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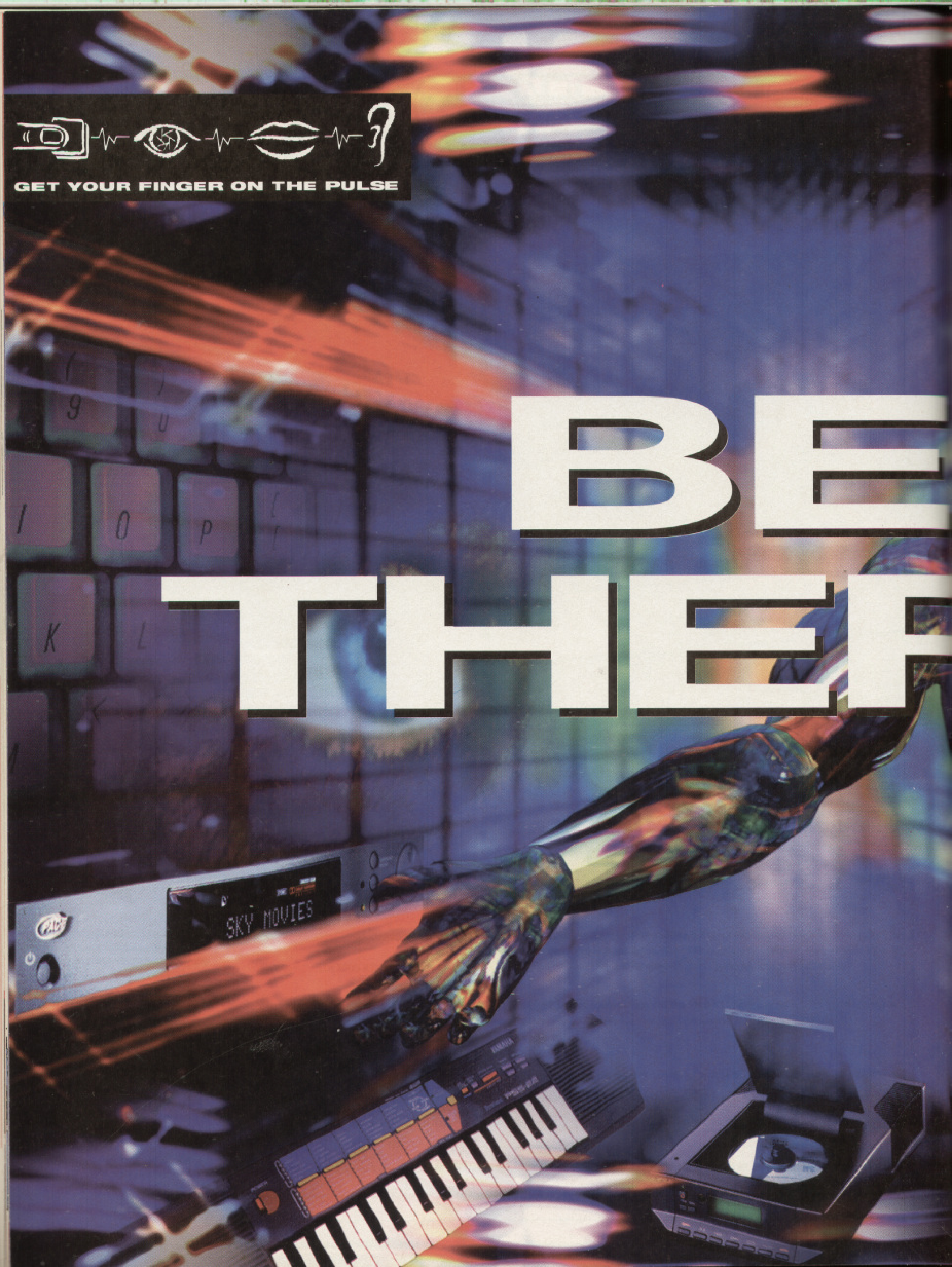
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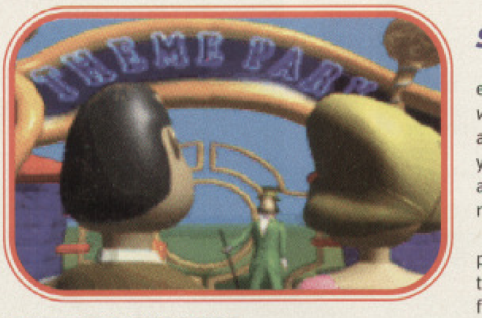
Want to create the greatest show on Earth? Then listen up, because here's Bullfrog with a smart beginner's guide to building the biggest and best Theme Park around.

Theme Park



GETTING STARTED

Welcome! My first piece of advice is aimed at those gamesplayers who are new to Theme Park and at those who have dabbled occasionally without much success, and that's: Play The Tutorial!

The Tutorial is there to aid the first-time player; it gradually introduces the basic elements of building paths, queues, rides and shops, before dropping you into the game with (hopefully) a fully-functioning Theme Park. (Incidentally, the park that the Tutorial helps you create is actually a very stable foundation to start your empire building on.)

SOME BASIC ADVICE

The little park visitors are very fickle — they're not easily pleased, yet the smallest thing will make them *very* unhappy *very* quickly. Therefore you should always pay close attention to what they're telling you. Keep an eye on the thought bubbles that appear above each person's head and react accordingly.

For instance, if several people get hungry in the same area then you should consider building a food stall of some description nearby. Likewise, if several people are upset about the cost of a stall or the quality of its prizes then you should either lower the price or increase the prize.

Don't try and build a monster park on your first go. Start to build up from a small but well-maintained base. That way you won't find yourself out of your depth with everything going wrong at once; it'll happen gradually.

Don't be afraid to remove rides that are placed incorrectly. It's far better to lose the money spent on this one ride than to distract your valuable mechanics from repairing your star attraction so that it blows up with people on it.

RIDES

The parks with the most rides tend to make the most money. More rides mean more punters, and more punters mean more money which, as we all know, makes the world go around, allows you to research better stuff and subsidises the wife's shopping trips.

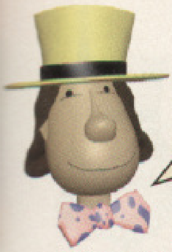
The little people tend to prefer a large variety of rides as opposed to loads of identical ones. This doesn't mean that you should only have one of each ride in the park, just that you should always choose a new ride over an existing one.

As rides get older they'll start breaking down more and more frequently. When this starts to happen you should consider selling the ride and replacing it with an upgraded one. This will put less strain on your mechanics and generally make everyone happier.

Open your park immediately on starting the game — even if most of the punters stay away, you should get one or two customers who'll contribute to your funds.

SHOPS & STALLS

One of the greatest sources of income is a well-placed shop or stall. They provide welcome instant cash returns and also serve to keep the punters happy. They do have two drawbacks, however...



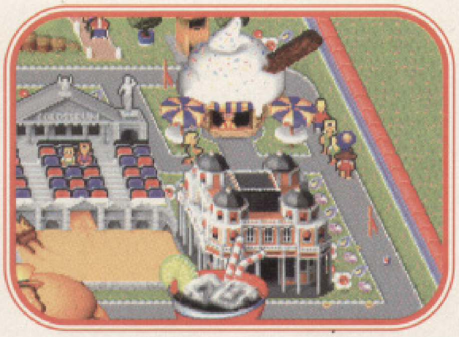
Never leave your park unattended as there is always something you could be doing — this is especially true of the larger parks as they are harder to maintain.

Litter is the major problem, as no-one likes a messy park. If there is too much litter then people will start to stay away from the park, and you certainly won't win many awards at the end of the year. Certain shops, such as the Coffee Shop, have bins inside and so take care of their own litter, although they are not quite as effective as Pokey Cola for quenching thirst. Whenever you buy a shop that produces litter you must make sure that you have sufficient handymen to combat the litter problem.

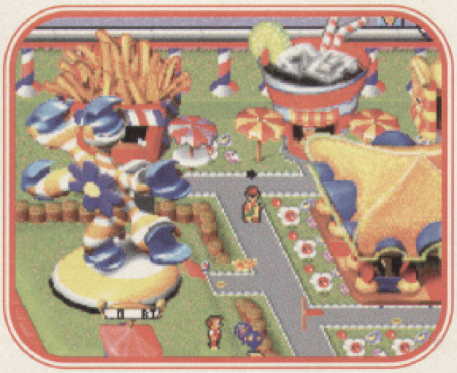
The other main problem is that of keeping them well stocked. A shop that has run out of stock is no use to anyone. You should always keep an eye on your shops to ensure that they have sufficient stocks to last, and if they haven't you should order some more immediately.

Try to learn how often you need to restock certain shops and try to get into some form of rhythm so that you don't have to keep looking around the map at all of your shops. If the advisor tells you that a certain shop is running low and you haven't already sent off an order for that shop then you should immediately order some more to minimise the amount of time that the shop is closed. (Note that if you are playing in Sandbox mode you don't have to worry about this.)

When positioning a ride, allow for the fact that you may wish to move the entrances and the exits.



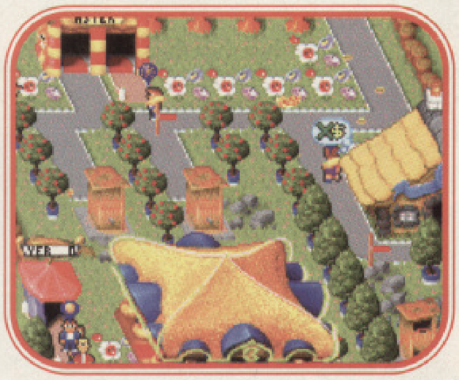
It's always worthwhile buying your own shares, not only to prevent yourself being bought out but also because they can be used as extra cash later on (assuming your park is doing well).



Try to ensure that the queue lengths are long enough to support all of the people who may want to go on the ride — people won't join a full queue and so they will miss out on the ride.

Stalls can be a very lucrative method of gaining some much-needed cash. They can also upset the punters who might feel that they are being conned in some way. Try to match the cost of each game with the chance of winning and the prize if they do so. Don't try to fleece the punters too much as they aren't daft and will soon see through your schemes and stop coming. A small cost and prize coupled with a moderate chance of winning provides more income than a risky high-cost, high-prize, lower-chance stall.

Stalls also have the added bonus that they entertain people (although not as much as the rides) and don't produce litter. They are also smaller than rides, and can be slotted into any nooks and crannies around the park. The punters tend not to have repeated goes at the same type of stall so, as with the rides, variety is the key. Of course, to have this variety you must research it...



FEATURES

Features such as trees, fences and lakes should never be underestimated. A featureless park is a bland park and is unlikely to win any awards. Features also impress the people who are new to the park, as well as making it look nice on-screen.

STAFF

The amount and types of staff that you have employed at any one time can make or break your park. As soon as you start placing shops that leave litter you should start employing a handyman. Likewise, as soon as your first ride starts to break down you should employ a

mechanic. Entertainers, on the other hand, are very good especially in the times where most of your rides are being repaired or it is raining. A slightly more detailed look at all of the staff follows...

Handymen should be employed the instant litter starts appearing on the ground. Keep an eye on any handymen that you employ as they might start getting confused by the layout of your park and end up missing large areas of the park that need cleaning. If this is the case then you may want to control their movements using the waypoint navigation system on the icon bar.

Mechanics should be employed as soon as your first ride shows signs of breaking down. They spend half of their life eating sandwiches so you must keep a careful eye on them. More often than not a mechanic will get to a nearby damaged ride before it completely blows up, but if there is more than on ride in trouble then you should direct the mechanic to fix one immediately and either shut down the other one or hire another mechanic. A single mechanic can usually maintain three or four rides successfully — but this varies depending on the quality of the rides, how often they are used and for how long.

Whenever you add a new ride to the park you should immediately increase your ticket price — the more rides you have, the more you can charge.

Always have stock for your shops on order — you can always delay its arrival by re-ordering.

A slightly risky tactic is to slow the speed of a damaged ride right down while the mechanic is fixing another ride. Hopefully the ride won't blow up (!) in the time it takes for the other ride to be fixed and the mechanic can then fix the new one. The upside of all this is that you only have one mechanic employed, and the little people at least have one ride they can go on as opposed to two closed ones to look at. If it works, then it works well. If it doesn't, it's disastrous.

Entertainers should be placed near queues that have a particularly long waiting time. In addition, at least one entertainer should be placed somewhere near the park entrance — this will allow him to hand out umbrellas to people entering the park should it start raining.

Guards only need to be hired if thugs start appearing in the park. You will notice the thugs when you start seeing beaten-up entertainers and rides breaking down more frequently than normal. When thugs do appear you must deal with them immediately. Hire plenty of guards and try to move your entertainers away from trouble spots. Guards will only escort thugs from the park if they see them doing something nasty, so you may have to move them about quite a bit.

THE ART OF ***GOOD PARK DESIGN***

When designing your park always try to think about what the punters will want at any one time and place things accordingly. Place a balloon shop right near the entrance so that the people part with their money while they are still happy. This will also help keep them in a good mood for the rest of their stay unless something bad happens.

People get enjoyment out of going on rides and winning on stalls, so try to cut down the amount of time they have to spend walking between one attraction and the next. One method of doing this is to have a straight path with rides coming off either side of it. Each ride is butted up against the side of the path with the entrance around the back and the exit leading straight back onto the path.

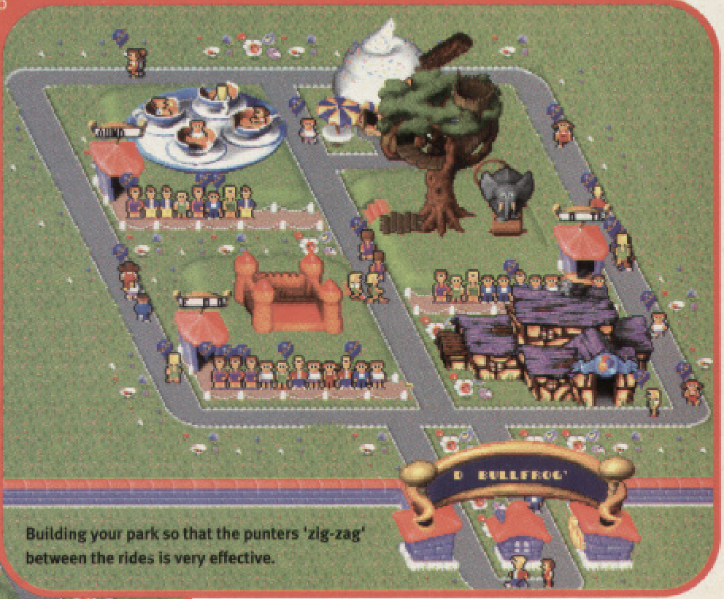
Try to stagger the rides, so that anyone leaving one ride is pointed straight at the entrance to the queue for the next. Using this method the punters will zig-zag between the rides and the amount of time they'll waste is minimal. The major disadvantage with this method is that it doesn't leave much room for decorative features like trees and bushes which make the park look nice and this may also put some people off.

If you start making a complex path system with rides and stalls all over the place, then you will have to place signposts down so that people will know where they are heading. If a person comes across a sign pointing towards a ride that they quite want to visit then they will feel happier about walking towards it, as opposed to just wandering aimlessly.

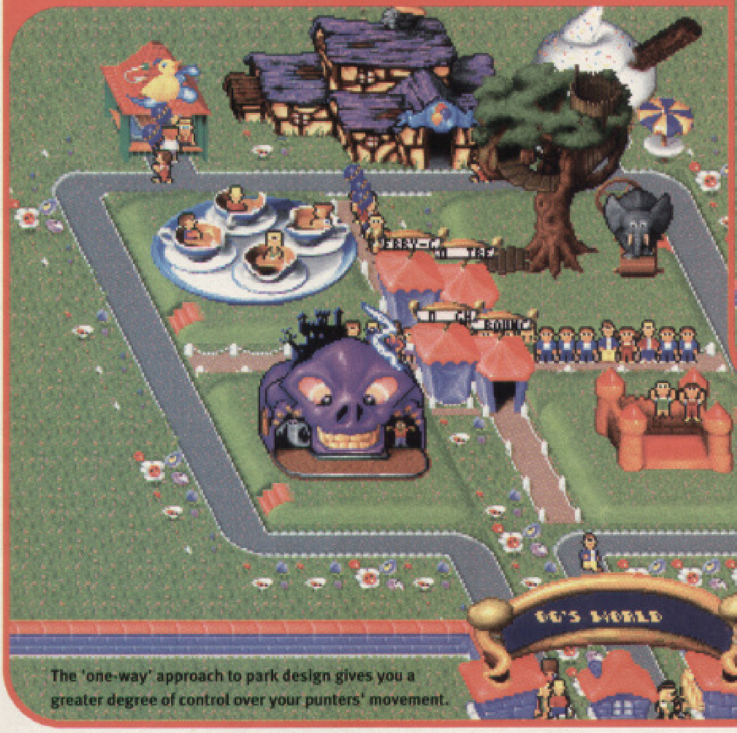
Also, signposts that point toward the exit allow annoyed people to leave more quickly rather than wandering around just getting more upset. Unhappy people tend not to go on rides or buy things from shops and so just clutter up the park and reduce the average of happy people in the park. As a result, your reputation and popularity will suffer somewhat, so they are best off out of the park and out of your hair.

Another method of park design is the one-way method. The park is organised in such a way that the punters have no choice but to walk around the park in an organised and orderly manner. This has advantages in that you should be able to work out exactly what any person will be requiring at any one time and be ready for it. In addition, the need for signposts is greatly reduced as there are less junctions for people to start worrying about.

The problems arise when too many people enter the park. Queues fill up and so people are unable to get a go on all of the rides. Due to the one-way structure of the park, they are unable to return to rides that they may have missed and so they are not getting the full enjoyment factor out of the park.



Building your park so that the punters 'zig-zag' between the rides is very effective.



The 'one-way' approach to park design gives you a greater degree of control over your punters' movement.

COMING ***SOON!***

Okay, so now you've got some basic hints and tips about how to get started. In the near future look out for the Theme Park Masterclass, which will help improve the advanced player's game.

Slow the game speed down when designing the park — this will allow you more time to place rides and give you a small amount of leeway when playing the game.

AWARDS

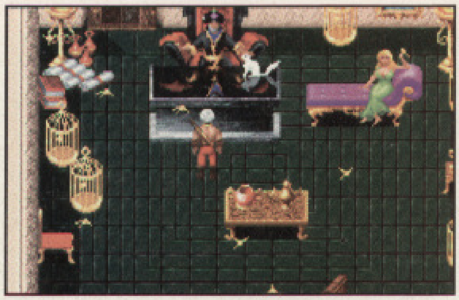
At the end of the year you will be presented with various charts detailing how you are doing. In addition, there are several awards that get handed out if you happen to be doing particularly well in certain areas of your park.

These awards are great things to aim for as they not only improve your reputation but add a substantial sum of money to your bank account. They are also a measure of how well you are doing in relation to your opponents. If you are constantly winning the 'Good Technology' award then you must be more advanced than all of your competitors.

The best advice is to concentrate on winning just one award at a time. Then the money that you gain from this will enable you to do better at winning the others.

OVERALL CHARTS

Travel with us now to a land of genies, magic carpets, beautiful princesses and fabulous treasures in this, the first part of our complete solution to SSI's enchanting arcade adventure...



Al-Qadim

In The Beginning...

We're not going to lower ourselves and meticulously explain how you get through the Maze that opens your quest — if you can't do that on your own, well, you might as well give up now...

Zaratan

After disembarking on the beach of your home city of Zaratan, head north and chat with your sister. Follow her, then talk to your father about your sword and his problems. Enter your parents' house to the east and talk to your mum.

Now head northwest to the home of Babazar the merchant. His daughter is seriously ill, and Babazar will ask you to fetch some medicinal berries for her from the oasis.

Head for the city gates, pausing to speak with anyone you meet along the way (giving money to those who ask for it will reward you with experience points). Before you go berry picking, pop in to see your sister at her home in the southwest of the city — she'll give you a sling.

The Oasis

The berries you need can be found on a bush almost directly northwest from where you enter the location. Take care here — move slowly and take on enemies one or two at a time, using bushes and shrubs for cover whenever possible.

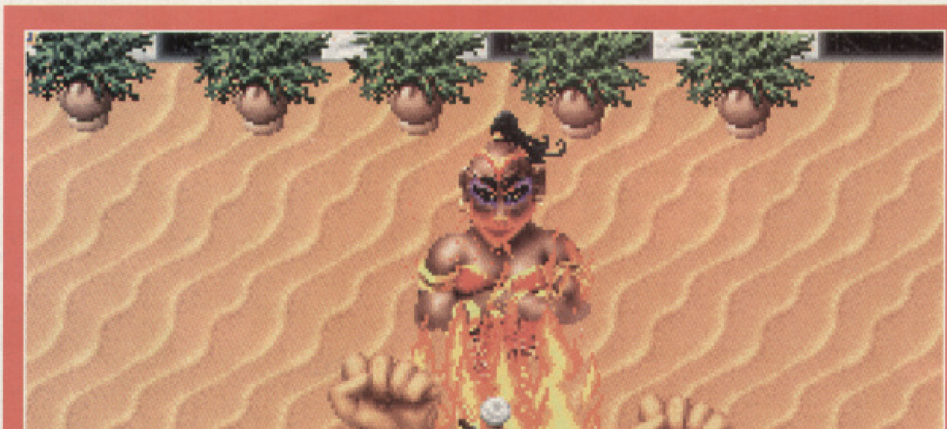
Once you find the bush, a Pahari — that's a mermaid to you and me — will appear. Agree to keep her secret and to deliver a message for her to the Qadi.

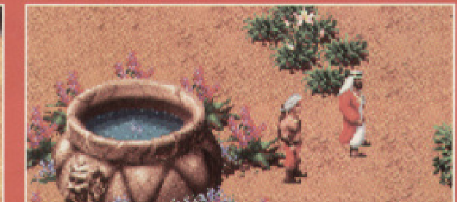
Take the berries back to Babazar. On the way you'll bump into your Corsair teacher, Sinbad, who'll give you a parchment. LOOK AFTER IT — you'll need it later!

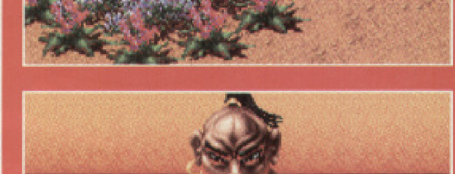
Visit the Qadi and agree to get your father and Haroon Wassab to sign the treaty. Go home and talk to your father. Once he's signed the treaty, go to Wassab's house and talk to him.

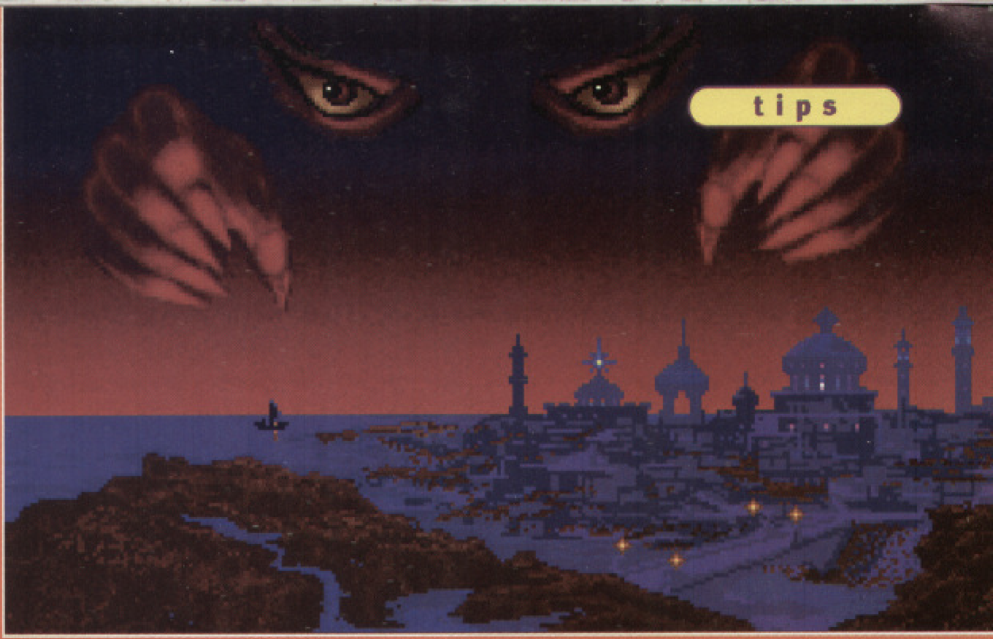
After Wassab agrees to sign the treaty, pick up your sister from her house and head for the Qadi's courtyard. Speak to Wassab and then take the signed treaty to the Qadi. Then inform the Qadi of the mermaid's message and agree to return his message.

Pop back to the oasis and pass the Qadi's message on to the mermaid. Speak at length with her, and eventually she'll grant you access to the healing waters on the other side of the oasis. Handy...









On returning home you'll hear a bit of bad news. Rush home and then head for the Qadi's courtyard. Agree to go and search for survivors then head back to the oasis.

Save the Caliph!

Walk west until you hit the sea, then walk north along the shoreline — eventually you'll find the Caliph, who's being attacked by some Debbi. Rescue him, then agree to search for his treasure — you'll find it in a barrel to the north. Return home for a newer, even nastier surprise.

After you've been exiled, go to the oasis and talk to the mermaid. Go the southwest corner of the map, and say the magic words to summon a giant Sea Turtle. Walk onto the Turtle's back and it'll carry you to Dead Man's Reef.

Dead Man's Reef

Once you reach the isle, search around — to the east you should find two chests each containing a key, one big, one small. Head west, killing anything nasty that gets in your way, until you come across a ship. Fight your way onboard and kill that annoying bloke with the bow and arrows. Walk around to the piece of land west of the ship and kill all the ghouls you find there — one of them is carrying another key.

Return to the ship and enter its hold. Use the keys to open the doors, and kill everything you meet — including the Sorceror Shashana. Take the treasure and walk through the portal to the north. Smash the magical orb (which can now be used to heal your wounds) and leave. Walk up onto the deck, and ask the ship's figurehead to take you to Bandar al-Sa'adat.

Bandar al-Sa'adat

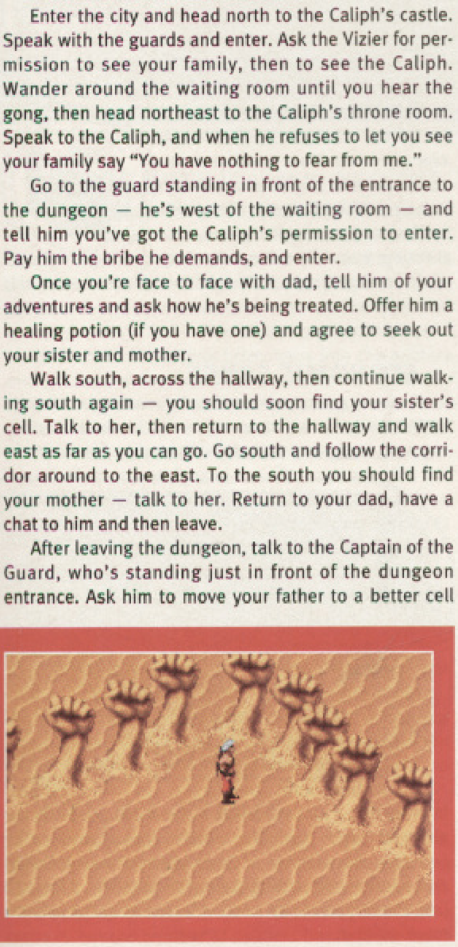
Enter the city and head north to the Caliph's castle. Speak with the guards and enter. Ask the Vizier for permission to see your family, then to see the Caliph. Wander around the waiting room until you hear the gong, then head northeast to the Caliph's throne room. Speak to the Caliph, and when he refuses to let you see your family say "You have nothing to fear from me."

Go to the guard standing in front of the entrance to the dungeon — he's west of the waiting room — and tell him you've got the Caliph's permission to enter. Pay him the bribe he demands, and enter.

Once you're face to face with dad, tell him of your adventures and ask how he's being treated. Offer him a healing potion (if you have one) and agree to seek out your sister and mother.

Walk south, across the hallway, then continue walking south again — you should soon find your sister's cell. Talk to her, then return to the hallway and walk east as far as you can go. Go south and follow the corridor around to the east. To the south you should find your mother — talk to her. Return to your dad, have a chat to him and then leave.

After leaving the dungeon, talk to the Captain of the Guard, who's standing just in front of the dungeon entrance. Ask him to move your father to a better cell and pay him 400 coins for the favour. If you can't afford that, he'll accept 200.



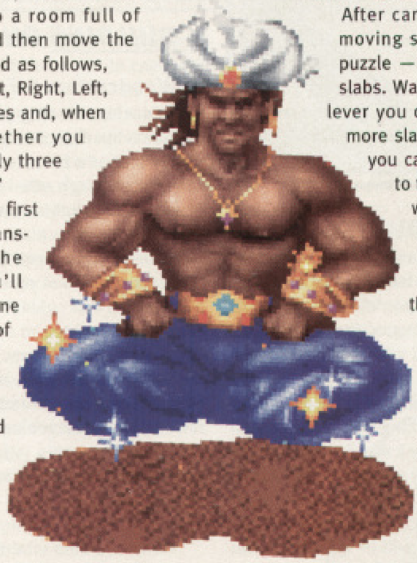
The Tower of Farid al-Mutan

Return to Zaratan on your ship and head for the Tower to the north of the oasis. Stand in front of the gates and say the magic words "Azullah Batan" (as told to you by the mermaid). Enter and walk north, until you're teleported to a dark room with a face carved into the floor. Step on the face and agree to take the tests.

"Remember, warrior, let your heart be your guide on this quest. Act with honor and wisdom and you will succeed."

Most of the early tests are so simple even a trained baboon could solve them. However, once you encounter the giant Acid Entity things start to get a little more complicated.

First off, you'll be taken to a room with six circles carved into the floor. Step on the blue circles as they appear until no circles are blue. Step on the face and answer his three questions thus: "The rune to the north"; "The rune to the south"; "I do not know".



Next you'll be taken to a room full of spikes. Step on the face and then move the levers until they're positioned as follows, from top to bottom: Left, Left, Right, Left, Right. Walk through the spikes and, when asked by the woman whether you would harm her master, reply three times "I would never do that."

On returning to where you first met the Entity, you'll be transported deeper into the labyrinth, where you'll encounter a room full of stone slabs floating in a vast pool of acid. Ride the slabs until you've managed to pull the lever and have got all the treasure from the chests and gained access to the passage to the south. Step on the face in the floor and answer "He is a man without honour".

Trot west and you'll come across a room with a deadly tiled floor. As you step on each blue 'safe' tile, others surrounding it will turn blue. Try to head northwest until a teleport takes you to the southeast corner — you should now be able to reach two chest. Now, from the chest to the west, head north and east until you reach the lever.

Pulling the lever changes the blue pathways. Trial and error will reveal a pathway leading south, two tiles from the west wall. Head south along the blue tiles and take the first turn to the west. Following this path will result in you being teleported to another blue tile — head west, then south to exit.

You'll soon encounter another face in the floor. To its questions answer "He is a jealous man who should learn to trust his wife" and "It is beautiful and precious. The world should see it."

After carefully passing the corridor of moving spikes you'll discover another puzzle — a pool of acid lined with stone slabs. Walk along the slabs and pull each lever you come across, which will reveal more slabs. When you've gone as far as you can, walk back and pull the lever to the south of the entrance, which will open up a pathway further south. Carry on walking and pulling levers, until you exit to the east. Speak to the face in the floor and agree never to seek out the mermaid again.

Head north until you meet the Entity again, who will grant you the answer to just one question — ask whichever one you fancy. You'll then be teleported north.

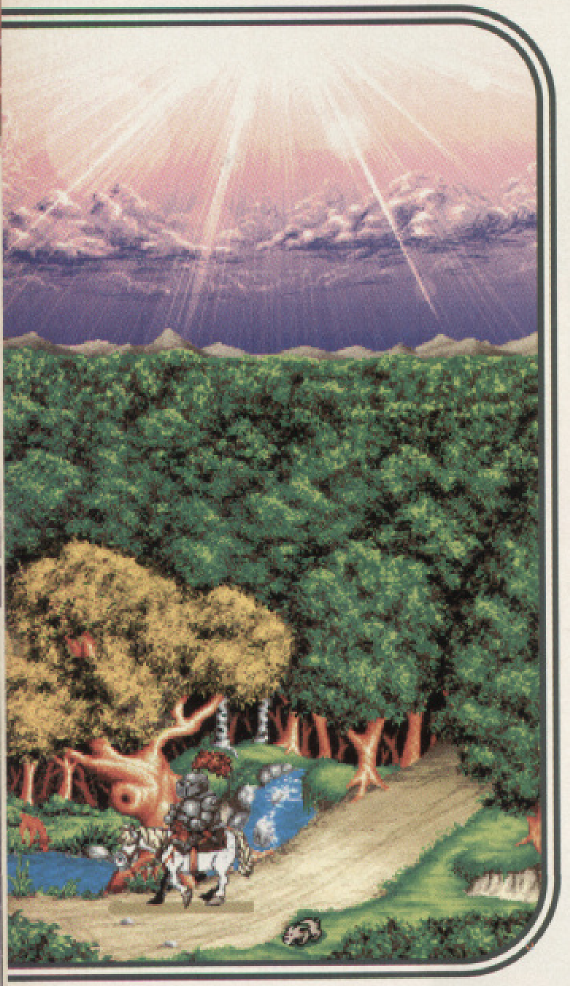
Walk along the corridor and up the stairs. Follow the hallway until you come to a doorway, which leads to the chamber of the Sorceror and his wife, the Pahari. Have a chat with them and agree to get a gilded dive for the Pahari. Return to your ship and set sail for the Isle of Shibaz...

Next Month!

The adventures continue next month in the second part of this complete solution. See you on Shibaz!

It's time to 'settle' down now (hoot!) with these top tips and hot hints for Blue Byte's cute strategy/wargame-type thing.

The *Settlers*



CONSTRUCTIVE ADVICE

Your first major decision as a would-be megalomaniac is to choose a suitable site for the construction of your fortress home. Make sure you choose a location blessed with plenty of lakes, mountains and forests nearby, which will provide you with lots of fish, ore and wood right from the off.

Now comes the enjoyable task of setting up your thriving community. The first thing you build should always be a sawmill, followed by a woodcutter's house and then a fisherman's hut near a suitable lake (obviously). The wise Settler knows that you need lots of planks and stones to build a proper dwelling.

Initially your material stocks will be quite high, but this will change as you expand your fledgeling community. Think carefully about what you build. For example, if you expand too quickly and forget to build a sawmill, you'll soon find that, no matter how many trees you've felled, there are no finished planks for your builders to work with.

Most importantly keep an eye out for enemy buildings, especially if they are knight's huts or keeps. If your enemy expands towards you, your boundaries will shrink and supply lines will be severed and whole buildings will be lost in a thrice.

PATHS OF GLORY

I believe it was the Emperor Hadrian who said "Rome was built on her roads". Or was it Dave? Well, whoever said it it's sound advice none-the-less, and well-structured pathways are vital to your colony's success. If you haven't got enough paths goods waiting to be transported will block the junctions, and before you know it your entire transportation infrastructure will grind to a halt.

Paths leading from the castle should always be built on a grid system and never splayed outwards like a star, as this can lead to hideous jams. A 'net' of paths allows your settlers to move around much faster.

But hey! As you build paths, spare a thought for the trees. Obviously, expansion is easier the more forests you have in or near your kingdom. Trouble is, the more paths you build, the more difficult it becomes to plant new trees and, as a result, your timber supplies will dry up and cause you no end of worry. To avoid this think green, and construct your pathways so that there are sufficient large empty areas where the environment can prosper.

BUILDING ON YOUR SUCCESS

Woodcutters & Foresters

You should always build a forester's hut right next to a woodcutter's abode because the two compliment each other perfectly. Probably the best way to create large forests is to plant the trees on slopes. This ensures that there are always large amounts of wood at your disposal and you don't waste any lowland that could be used for construction.

Sawmills

Build your sawmill right at the start of the game. Wood is a vital raw material, and you must have a Settler whose only joy in life is buzzsawing trees into planks.

Farms

Farms are also vital to your colony infrastructure. Although your early Settlers can survive on fish, once you get your mines up and running, you'll need a lot of food to feed your hard-working miners. So, the farmer grows the corn, the corn then goes to the miller, the miller grinds it into flour for the baker and the baker bakes the bread for your miners. The corn can also be sent to the pig farmer to fatten his pigs — they will eventually be delivered to the butcher and then to the miners.

It's best to choose wide open spaces for your farms, and in most cases two should be sufficient to supply your Settler's needs.

Fisherman Huts

Fishing is certainly the easiest way to provide food for your Settlers. However, don't build too many huts around the same lake because the fish stocks will dwindle down to nothing.

Boat Yards

If you've built the Settlers equivalent of Venice, it's a good idea to built boats to transport your foodstuffs. Typically one boat yard should be enough to build a dinky fleet and, once you have five or six boats in stock, halt the supply of wood to the boat yard so you don't waste your precious timber.

Garrisons

As soon as you have enough raw materials it's a good idea to build a couple of garrisons on the frontier. While Knight's Huts will suffice early on in the game, soldiers are trained much quicker in garrisons and provide a better defence for your economic heartlands.

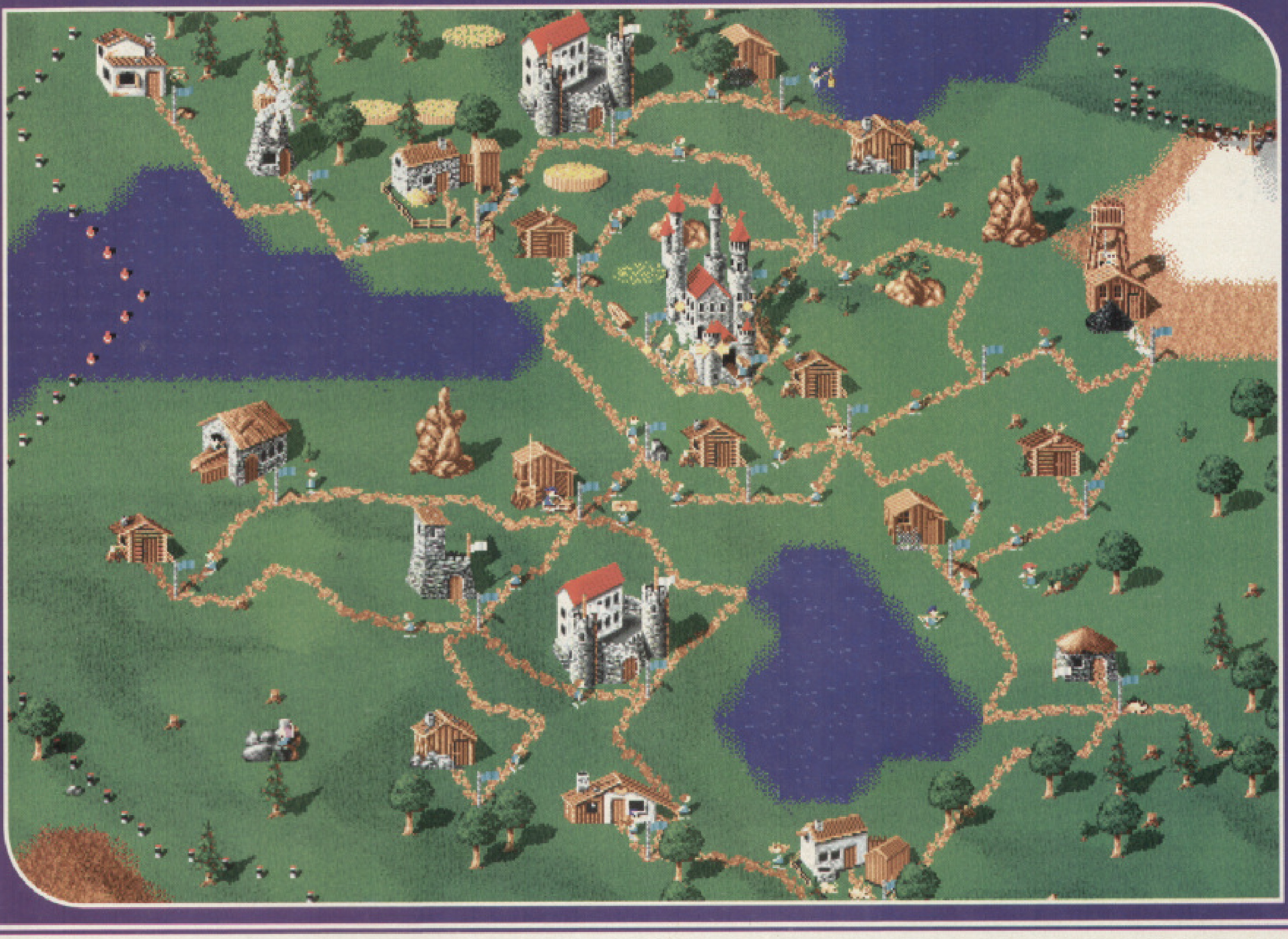
ECONOMIC SENSE

As every government and party manifesto claims to understand, a prosperous economy depends on making sure that every new development is connected to the infrastructure. It's not enough just to build lots of pathways and stockpile raw materials — the clear-thinking empire builder keeps an eye on how the buildings are positioned in relation to one another.

Let me explain. Imagine you've just opened some mines in the mountains. It makes a lot of sense to build your toolmakers, armourers, etc, right next to them, thus creating a semi-independent community far from the enemy borders.

Now build a garrison nearby, so that you can train up knights and kit them out with weapons. Finally you need to feed the hungry hordes so build some farms or, if there's a lake nearby, a fisherman's hut.

Oh, another word about laying out pathways. Bear in mind that a carrier always delivers his goods by the shortest route possible, which you can deduce by counting the number of flags between one location and another. By cutting down the number of flags to just those you really need, transportation becomes much quicker.



COPING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

As your population grows, you're likely to reach a situation where you have too many people and not enough jobs to go around. Rather than trying to find plausible ways to massage the unemployment stats, the best thing to do is embark on a massive relocation and expansion scheme — in other words, start a war.

Draft most of the dole scroungers into the military and put the rest in garrisons to await the inevitable victory. Then, once you've started setting up new road systems and establishing new settlements, you'll find that your unemployment figures will magically drop.

ATTACK & DEFENCE

In a battle only military buildings — guard towers, guard rooms and garrisons — can be attacked. Pay attention to the little flag fluttering in front of each military building — not only does its colour tell you who owns it, but the number of soldiers inside is indicated by how high the flag is flying. If you see a building with the flag low, it should be a doddle for you to capture it for yourself.

Remember to look after the gold stored inside military buildings — the more you've got, the greater your men's morale will be. If you want to take a strong enemy garrison, your boys' strength and morale should be at least 90% — and build an armoury as soon as possible so that your supply of weapons doesn't suddenly dry up and leave you in the lurch. Remember that you'll need large reserves of coal and iron to make the swords and shields.

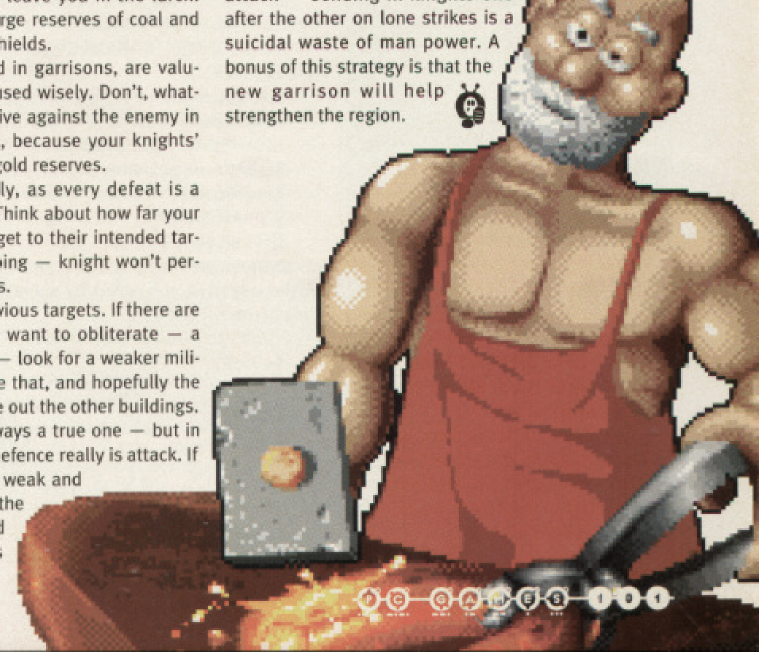
Knights, which are trained in garrisons, are valuable and effective warriors if used wisely. Don't, whatever you do, launch an offensive against the enemy in the early stages of the game, because your knights' morale will be as low as your gold reserves.

Plan your attacks carefully, as every defeat is a waste of precious resources. Think about how far your knights will have to travel to get to their intended target. A tired — or worse, sleeping — knight won't perform to the peak of his abilities.

Don't always go for the obvious targets. If there are some major installations you want to obliterate — a garrison, say, or some mines — look for a weaker military target in the vicinity. Take that, and hopefully the newly-erected border will wipe out the other buildings.

It's a cliche — and not always a true one — but in The Settlers the best form of defence really is attack. If part of your realm looks a bit weak and ripe for enemy attack, locate the nearest enemy build-up and wade in. If your army meets the enemy on the way they'll start rucking right there and then. Bear in mind, however, that the two armies will only engage if they can see each other — if there's a hill or mountain obscuring their view they'll frequently (and infuriatingly) march right past each other.

If the enemy has taken one of your towers inside your border, a good tactic is to build a garrison nearby and wait for it to stock up with gold and knights before launching a counter-attack — sending in knights one after the other on lone strikes is a suicidal waste of man power. A bonus of this strategy is that the new garrison will help strengthen the region.



cheat lab

Welcome to the Cheat Lab, fellow games gurus. If you're the impatient type, the kind of person who wants a $2 billion bank balance in Theme Park and 255 lives in Zool 2, then this section is dedicated to you. Hacks, cheats, hints and your questions answered, we do it all...

Theme Park

Bullfrog/Electronic Arts

We all know that building up a successful theme park is a difficult proposition, especially if the bank won't bung you some extra money for those exciting new rides or some extra handymen to clean up the vomit. Before you know it, you're struggling to keep the business afloat; the people are unhappy, the rides keep breaking down and the chicken men are picketing the gates in protest.

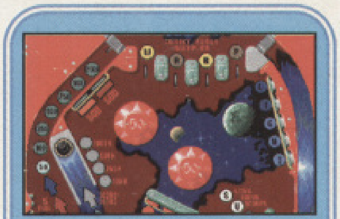
Luckily Andy Hayton has got a hack that allows you to forget about tightening your purse-strings and to splash the cash with wild abandon. Simply start a new game with the nickname **CHEAT** and borrow as much money as the bank will allow. Save the game in the first slot (slot 0) and then quit out back to DOS.

Change into the save directory and, using a hex editor (something like Xtree or PC Tools will do nicely), load up the file **CHEAT.G0**. Edit the hex positions 12 through 16 and change all the values to zeros. Finally, reload the game and you'll find that your debt will have been mysteriously written off. Voila, loadsamoney!

But, if you're not confident hacking away at your Theme Park files and would prefer a cheat that's a little bit easier to get to grips with, how about this one.

In the directory containing all your saved games, there is a file called **demo.??** (the file extension may vary). Simply rename that file to replace one of your nine saved games, i.e in my Theme Park game I typed **COPY DEMO.GY DEANO.G0**, which copies the demo file into the first save game slot.

Now reload Theme Park, select the saved game and you will have a rather nifty park on your hands, with all the rides, toilets, trees, and fences already in place.



Pinball Fantasies

21st Century Entertainment

If you're still determined to play pinball at home rather than popping down the pub and playing a Jurassic Park machine or Star Wars, then here are a few cheats to make things that tiny bit more interesting.

Typing EXTRA BALLS while the table scrolls up and down gives you seven balls to play with and you might want to try tapping in TECH, GREETS, TSP and GABRIEL. Sadly, I've no idea what they do, the bloke on the phone didn't say...

Dark Side Of Xeen

US Gold

Apparently our close personal chum Mark Choi (actually, we've never met him) has been hacking away at Dark Side of Xeen for quite some time, and if there are any role-players out there who'd like to boost their finances up to the dizzy sum of 4,294,967,295 in gold and gems, sit back and listen up as Mark tells you how to go about it.

First of all save the game in the first saved-game slot and use your friendly DEBUG DOS editor to edit the file **DARK01.SAV**. When DEBUG has loaded, type the following to edit the file:

```
-NDARK01.SAV
-L
-E 3AFB FF FF FF FF FF FF FF FF
-W
-Q
```

Now reload the game, load up the saved game and you'll find you have more money than you could possibly know what to do with.

Cannon Fodder

Virgin Interactive Entertainment

Having trouble with Cannon Fodder? Do you want to skip through the missions so your squad can fly the helicopter and drive the tanks around? Of course you do — and thanks to Glenn Comiskey, you can do just that.

Start Cannon Fodder in the usual way and then save your game. Quit back to DOS and then, following the simple process below, you can edit your saved file (I hope you remember what you called it) so that the next time you load it up, you'll be able to play any of the 24 missions in the game.

Firstly, type:

```
C:\DOS\DEBUG C:\CANNON\<filename here>.CF [Press ENTER]
```

Obviously if you have installed the game in a different directory, i.e. **D:\GAMES\CANNON**, then type:

```
C:\DOS\DEBUG D:\GAMES\CANNON\<filename here>.CF [Press ENTER]
```

Next type in the following hex values:

```
-E10C <insert value here> [Press ENTER]
-E100 <insert value here> [Press ENTER]
-E132 <insert value here> [Press ENTER]
-E134 <insert value here> [Press ENTER]
-W [Press ENTER]
-Q [Press ENTER]
```

Still with me? Good. Let's say, for example, I wanted to skip to the last mission. I saved my game as DEANO.CF so I would type in the following:

```
C:\DOS\DEBUG C:\CANNON\DEANO.CF
-E10C 18h
-E100 42h
-E132 06h
-E134 06h
-W
-Q
```

Yes, it sounds complicated but it's really very simple and so, if you're confident enough to muck about with your Cannon Fodder files, here are those all-important mission values.

NO.	TITLE	E10C	E100	E132	E134
1	The Sensible Initiation	01h	00h	01h	01h
2	Onward Virgin Soldier	02h	01h	02h	02h
3	Antarctic Adventure	03h	03h	01h	01h
4	Super Smashing Namtastic	04h	04h	04h	04h
5	Those Vicious Vikings	05h	08h	03h	03h
6	Westward Ho	06h	0Bh	02h	02h
7	Greenland Redblood	07h	0Dh	03h	03h
8	Guerrilla Warfare	08h	10h	04h	04h
9	Great Scott Good Shoot	09	14h	02h	02h
10	One Gigantic Dust Bow	0Ah	16h	05h	05h
11	Jungle More Jungle	0Bh	1Bh	03h	03h
12	Chiller Thriller Killer	0Ch	1Eh	06h	06h
13	More Moors	0Dh	24h	01h	01h
14	Bomb Alley	0Eh	25h	03h	03h
15	Get Orf Moi Laand	0Fh	28h	03h	03h
16	Going Undergroun	10h	2Bh	02h	02h
17	The Moor The Merrier	11h	2Dh	01h	01h
18	Underpants Electric	12h	2Eh	05h	05h
19	Diablo Downstairs	13h	33h	01h	01h
20	Moors The Pity	14h	34h	04h	04h
2	Explore My Hole	15h	38h	01h	01h
22	Desert Disaster	16h	39h	04h	04h
23	Moors The Mortem	17h	3Dh	05h	05h
24	Bomb The Base	18h	42h	06h	06h

Finally, if you experiencing a lack of recruits, it's possible to give yourself 255 strapping new soldiers by editing your saved game as follows:

At the C:\ prompt, type this in:

```
C:\DOS\DEBUG C:\CANNON\<filename here>.CF [Press ENTER]
-E112 FF
-W
-Q
```

Sorted!

Sim City 2000

Maxis

You thought running a successful theme park was tough? Well, getting the Midland to give you a loan to build a throbbing metropolis is even *more* difficult. Hello Mr Bank Manager, could you lend me $242 million to build Grimsby, please? I don't think so, somehow. But don't despair, for help is close at hand. With these few simple hacks and code tweaks, you too can give yourself a huge, tax-free wedge to finance your city building.

First, start a new game and — using the map editor — create a new coastal city with 0% hills, 0% water and 100% trees. Next save the game, quit back to DOS and using a popular hex editor — again something like Xtree Gold or PC Tools — load in the saved game and edit the following values.

ADDRESS	ORIGINAL VALUE	NEW VALUE
00027	01 (usually)	0F
00029	4E	FF
0002A	20	FF

Now reload Sim City 2000, call up the saved game and you should now have a bank balance to the tune of $242,000,000.

UFO: Enemy Unknown

MicroProse

Following on from our tips in the last issue, Stephen Darcy has made conquering the alien threat a whole lot easier with a UFO cheat that gives you a massive $1 billion to play with. Bye, bye funding problems, hello Plasma rifles, Laser tanks and Blaster Launchers...

Simply start a new game and save it in the first saved-game slot. Now quit back to DOS and go into Windows. Double-click on the notepad icon in the Accessories window and open the file **UFO\GAME_1**.

Choose the 'Any File' option and open the file called **liglob.dat**. Now add two u's — by pressing the U key and ALT GR — to the start of the top line and then save the file. Now restart UFO, load up the saved game and you'll have over $900 million in the Xcom coffers.

cheat lab

Interactive

Cheat Lab goes interactive this month as our hard-working technicians delve deep into the bulging postbag to reply to some of your gaming problems.

Dear Cheat Lab,

Simon The Sorcerer is driving me nuts. I've managed to get to the Tower Of Doom, I've talked to the mirror and to the Demons, but I can't figure out how to send them back to Hell. How do I figure out what they're real names are? What do I do after that? Any help would be appreciated.

Richard O'Donnell,
Sutton Coalfield.

Right. Hopefully by this point you have done the following: picked up the spear and the shield; retrieved the skull on the ceiling with the spear; crushed the chest under the block to get the candles; picked up the pouch, the sock, the book and the magic wand from Sordid's bedroom; captured the mouse and, phew, talked to the magic mirror.

After talking to the demons, take the book from the shelf and get the chemicals from the workbench. Use the chemicals on the shield and hang the shield on the hook. Pop back down the stairs again and talk to the mirror. Ask to see the lab upstairs and you will learn the demons real names. Read both of the books that you took and then go back upstairs.

Talk to the demons and you'll automatically perform the banishing spell. Finally walk over to Sparky the talking teleport and press the big, red button.

Dear Cheat Lab,

While I look forward to using your tips to complete Ultima 8 printed in the August issue, I haven't managed to get past the earlier levels. Any advice on how I can get the key to Mordea's bedroom?

P. Doherty,
Co. Dublin.

Ah, you must be after the ceremonial dagger that belongs to the Necromancers. All you have to do to get this is to hang around the palace in Tenebrae until the Lady Mordea and her maid enter the room shown below. Don't talk to Mordea, but have a chat to her maid instead. She'll take a shine to you (what a charming fellow you are) and ask you to pop round to her humble abode later in the day.

At the appropriate time, head into the east of the city to see her. She has the key to the cupboard. Talk to her nicely then take the key, run back to the palace and open the door in Mordea's bedroom (not while she's in there fast asleep, obviously) where you will find a chest. Inside this chest is the mystical, magical Necromancer's dagger.

Dear Cheat Lab,

In Mortal Kombat, when the game yells at me to 'Finish Him!' I can't seem to get the death moves right. I know the move for Johnny Cage but I don't know what the others are. Please help!

Adam Williams,
Sheffield.

Okay, apparently you can spine-rip and heart-grab with these moves...

Jonny Cage	*— Right, Right, Right + Fire*
Kano	*— Left, Left + Fire*
Lui Kang	*— Down, Left, Up, Right, Down + Down*
Rayden	*— Right, Right, Left, Left, Left + Fire*
Sub-Zero	*— Right, Down, Right + Fire*
Scorpion	*— Down, Down + Fire*
Sonya Blade	*— Right, Right, Left, Left + Fire*

Dear Cheat Lab,

Is there an easy way to defeat Ethereals in UFO? Every time I go to a terror site, they use mind control on my soldiers and everybody dies.

Bryan Swan,
Andover.

Nope. The Ethereals are the big UFO bad guys and there's no easy way to stop them taking control of your soldiers unless you have a Psionics Lab. Unfortunately, you can only get one of these if you capture an Ethereal or a high-ranking Sectoid alive, and the best way to do this is with the Stun Bomb Launcher.

Having captured an alien, research it and you'll discover Psionics. All you then have to do is build a Psi Lab, 10 or so Psi Amps and train your soldiers in Psionics.

As for the terror sites, you often tend to lose most of your soldiers for very little reward. My advice is to ignore them and stick to capturing the UFOs.

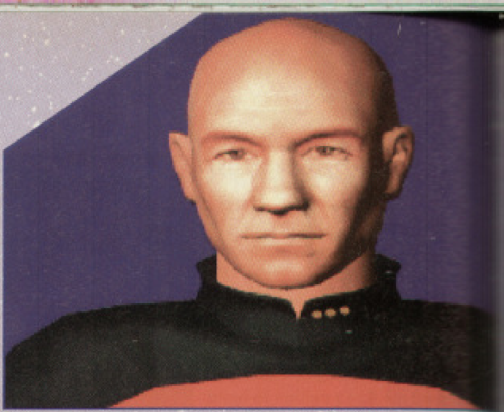
Stuck in an adventure?
Do you know any hot tips for todays top PC games?

If the answer to either of these questions is "Yes" grab a postcard and send your tips or queries to us at: CHEAT LAB, PC GAMES, Emap Images, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. You never know, you might be lucky enough to win a software prize.

IT'S NOT OUR FAULT!

PC GAMES can not be held responsible for loss of data or for the tips failing to work properly or for anything strange and bizarre that might happen to you and your PC within the next 153 years. You use these tips at your own risk. If anything goes wrong it's your fault. Just wanted to make that bit clear.

Deep-space combat has been a staple ingredient of computer games ever since they were first created. But, as Inferno and TIE Fighter prove, we've come a long way since the days of Space Invaders and Elite. Alex Fraser goes...



Beyond the final frontier

***Space** could hardly be regarded as the Final Frontier for video games. Traditionally, games-players were mostly fans of science fiction TV shows like Star Trek and movies like Star Wars, who were happy to emulate their heroes and fight off invading spacefleets. Consequently space combat has been THE major theme of games ever since Taito's Space Invaders was released in 1978.*

But as DID's Inferno and Lucasarts' TIE Fighter show, we're now light years away from gunning down side-stepping bugs with a trundling laser base. Now that the hardware is capable of it we can play space combat SIMULATIONS, and really put ourselves into the moon boots of a roguish Harry Mudd-style space trader, or a crack starfighter pilot like Luke Skywalker or his Imperial opposite number.

Modern additions such as a 3D cockpit view of the galaxy, stereo sound effects and believable flight controls all make the fantasy real, but the roots of this gaming sub-genre lie well in the past...

LAUNCH-POINT **ZERO**

Of course, lift-off came with Elite, which was first launched on the BBC Micro in 1984 and converted to the PC in 1987. Ian Bell and David Braben's space epic was undeniably years ahead of its time, but it was also a game of two halves.

The weaker half consisted of tedious trading, hawking computers or food around the galaxy — usually the safer, unexciting sectors — but the awesome 3D space flight half was worthy reward. The graphics were spartan, sure, but the wire-frame spacecraft, with hidden-line removal yet, were more realistic than any other game's of the time and the atmosphere generated was beyond anything else.

As you lined up your ship with a docking port, nudging the rotational velocity to match the space station's, you felt as if you were in 2001: A Space Odyssey, and in fact, if you equipped yourself with a docking computer, Strauss' Blue Danube Waltz came through the speakers during the docking procedure, just as it did in the movie scene.

As the game progressed you gained a seasoned space rogue's eye for identifying fellow travellers and guessing whether or not they were worth attacking or running away from. The artificial intelligence controlling the other ships must have been marvellously clever because dogfighting was a graceful, skilful process and the enemy ships seemed so intelligent and manoeuvred so realistically.

One of Elite's big thrills was locking a missile on to a pirate's exhaust then watching it twist away, chasing him around the ether until all that was left of him was a cloud of dust and a drifting collection of cargo containers for you to filch with your fuel scoop.

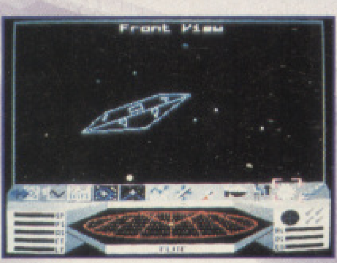
The first Elite conversion from BBC to PC was exact, though by the time Firebird released it in 1987 those black and white graphics looked antique, even if you were playing the 'filled-graphics' version of the game (included on the disk in case you had more than a 6MHz 8086 under the bonnet).

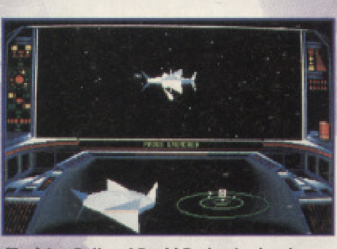
In 1988 Firebird commissioned a rewrite of Elite — Elite Plus — a game which was essentially the same, except with enhanced coloured, filled-in graphics and prettier option screens. There were also a couple of useful additions, such as an automatic ship identifier, which made the game that little bit better.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW **CLOTHES**

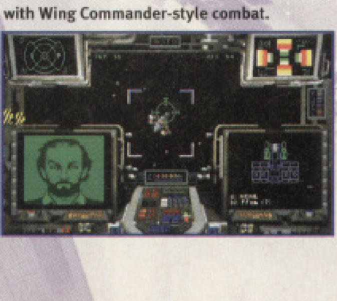
The official Braben-designed sequel to Elite didn't see the light of day until the end of last year, and when it did — boy! — was there a hoo-hah. Everyone in the world seemed to be heralding Frontier: Elite II as the best game ever, mainly because (a) the first one was a classic, and (b) Frontier was the same but with more of everything, so it had to be even MORE of a classic.

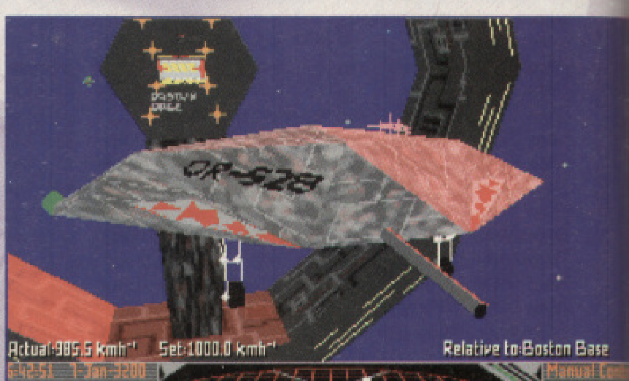
For instance, it had: more stars (200 billion, most of them real), each with more planets, each with more space stations, both in orbit and on the ground; more



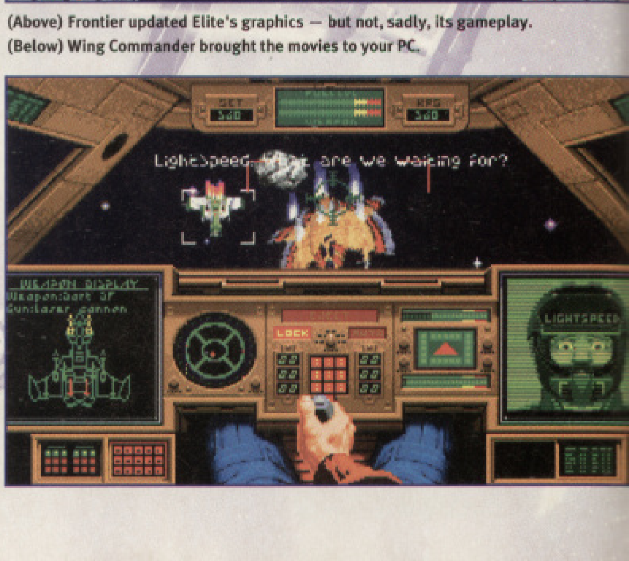


(Top) Ian Bell and David Braben's classic Elite, the game that arguably kicked off the whole 3D space combat genre. Just look at those *amazing* line vector graphics!
(Above) Hyperspeed was MicroProse's less-than-successful attempt at an 'Elite beater'.
(Below) Privateer blended Elite-style trading with Wing Commander-style combat.





(Above) Frontier updated Elite's graphics — but not, sadly, its gameplay.
(Below) Wing Commander brought the movies to your PC.



spaceships which flew more realistically and which you could now BUY before kitting them out with all sorts of exotic hardware; more special missions, which ranged from reconnaissance sorties for the Federation to assassinations for embittered merchants.

And then there were the full light-source shaded, texture-mapped, multi-viewpoint graphics. And all those dramatic classical themes you could have playing during battles and docking. No wonder everyone liked it. I was so convinced by the reviews that even I, a reviewer, BOUGHT it... and then I DID wonder why everyone liked it. It's practically a heresy, I know, but I say now and for the record that...

...I think Frontier was rubbish. (You're on your own here, Alex — Dave.) It had all the features mentioned above and more, like fiddly controls, hopeless combat and a complete dearth of atmosphere. The new, more realistic flight physics (which require you to actually reverse thrust to slow down) were a royal pain in the pants, and the multi-level icon-driven menu system was so complicated it required an explanatory flow chart to be included in the box!

The graceful combat of Elite was scrapped in favour of a speeded-up system in which enemy vessels circled your own ship at extreme range, then screamed past you and back off to the event horizon before you could line them up in your sights. Without the combat, the boring trading took centre stage, and the complications of the new spaceflight dynamics and the dire dogfighting made this even more tedious than in Elite.

I struggled with Frontier for a month, but after that even the special missions, most of which were essentially the same anyway, didn't entice me back. What a disappointment.

ELITE'S **LEGACY**

But even if Elite's successor didn't amount to much, Elite had at least got the gamesplaying public interested in space simulations, and inspired other programmers and designers to have a go.

In 1989 MicroProse got in on the act with Light Speed and its sequel, Warp Speed, two Elite-style games in which the player explored the galaxy, trading, meeting new alien species and, of course, fighting it out with them. Both games were good — they just weren't as good as Elite and so garnered an apathetic reception from UK players.

Meanwhile, Digital Image Design followed up their successful-but-flawed F-29 Retaliator with Epic, a combat simulator which seemed to spend years in development, then turned out to be a hopelessly damp squib. Fortunately, they've been somewhat more successful with Inferno...

Far more exciting than Epic ever was was Wing Commander, designed by Chris Roberts and released by Origin in 1990. This was a pure all-action combat simulation which abandoned vector graphics and opted for expanding sprites to create the 3D visuals. The gameplay was fast and fun blasting stuff, with a Buck Rogers-ish storyline about invading cat people linking the missions together.

Wing Commander also had extra nuances such as being able to communicate with your comrades and your enemies by multiple-choice radio, but it was the graphics that really impressed people at the time.

Origin followed up Wing Commander with various add-on disks, and then came Privateer, which used similar graphics techniques and the storyline structure but also had a sideline in Elite-style trading. Privateer was released almost simultaneously with Frontier and in many ways it was similar, particularly as you had to start the game practically from scratch then trade for hours on end before you could afford a ship which could take on the main part of the game. What let it down further was the fact that it used the Wing Commander game engine for combat, and that made it look very dated.

A NEW **HOPE**

The game that rendered Wing Commander and its entourage obsolete was Lucasarts' X-Wing. This game pandered to every Star Wars fan's dream of flying an X-Wing starfighter into battle against the Imperial forces, dogfighting with TIE fighters and TIE bombers and flying over mighty Star Destroyers and, ultimately, the Death Star itself.

That the game was based on a Lucasfilm movie meant that Lucasarts could really pull out all the stops and the result was a game which made the player feel that, to all intents and purposes, he was IN Star Wars. The combat was perfect, and felt exactly like the dogfighting in the movie looked. The missions too were brilliantly conceived, involving X-Wings, Y-Wings and A-Wings, all of which had their own particular flight characteristics.

The graphics were all 3D vectors again, light-source shaded and highly detailed right down to the Rebel Alliance insignia on the wings. And, of course, the effect was made complete by superb sounds — digitised TIE fighter engines screaming past your head, the radio chatter of your wingmen, and John Williams' Star Wars soundtrack which was piped through LucasArts' iMuse to heighten the excitement during combat. To be honest, it was hard to conceive how X-Wing could possibly have been better.

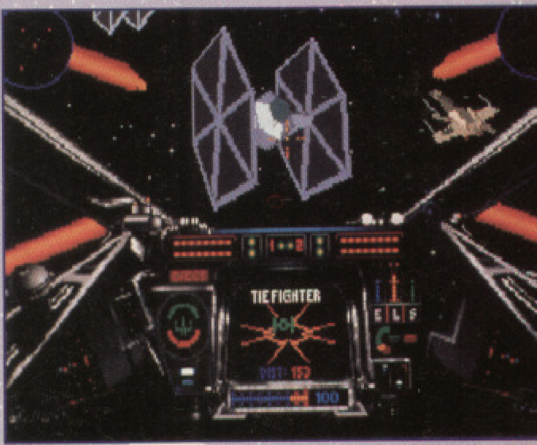
THE ADVENTURE IS JUST **BEGINNING**

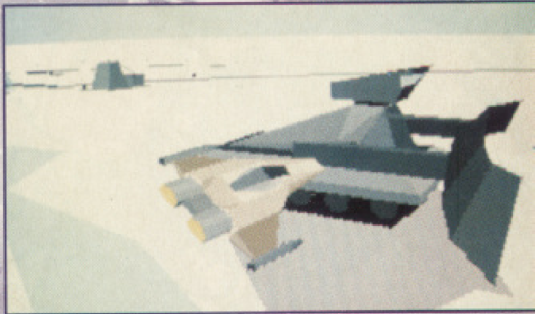
This is the part of the feature where you'd normally expect the writer to make educated guesses on what's going to happen with his subject over the next year or so, but I'll be honest with you, I don't know.

As I mentioned, when X-Wing was released I didn't think things could get much better and, with TIE Fighter, they haven't... much. MicroProse have their impressive-looking CD-ROM version of Star Trek: The Next Generation which should be good, considering the care that ST:TNG's creators have taken to create a believable atmosphere around their fictional universe.

It's unlikely that CD-ROM holds many answers (Rebel Assault was a perfectly enjoyable shoot-'em-up, but it wasn't a simulation). There's even speculation about future simulations using SVGA graphics for almost photo-realistic action, but I can't see how a game like TIE Fighter could run if it has to shift double the amount of pixels around the screen, at least not without some kind of major leap in processor power.

Could it be that we're at the video game equivalent of the impassable lightspeed barrier? Can none exceed the current standard? Or is someone out there planning on taking us into video games hyperspace? Only time will tell...



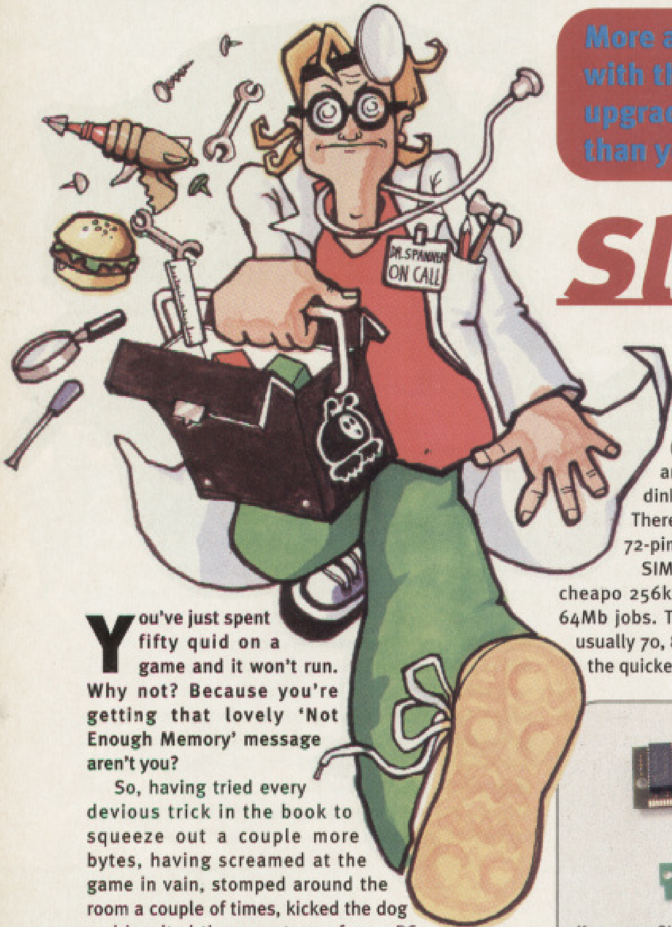


(Top) X-Wing combined intensely-exciting dogfighting action with an authentic Star Wars atmosphere to create one of the most successful games of last year. A modern classic.
(Above) Epic was DID's first foray into 3D space combat games and although it was fast and pretty, what it *wasn't* is very good. Still, it seems that the Runcorn-based coding whizzes learn from their mistakes...
(Below) ...Because Inferno, reviewed EXCLUSIVELY this issue, is excellent! Hurrah!

DR SPANNER'S CASEBOOK

More and more modern games demand that your PC be endowed with the memory of a herd of elephants. But don't worry — upgrading your 1Mb mouse to an 8Mb monster is a lot easier than you might think. And here's Dr Spanner to tell you how to...

Slam in the RAM!



You've just spent fifty quid on a game and it won't run. Why not? Because you're getting that lovely 'Not Enough Memory' message aren't you?

So, having tried every devious trick in the book to squeeze out a couple more bytes, having screamed at the game in vain, stomped around the room a couple of times, kicked the dog and insulted the parentage of your PC, you suddenly see the light. "I can see the light", you say, "I need some more memory". Spooky.

But fear not. Dr Spanner is back again with his medical bag full of painless ways to stuff all the RAM you'll ever need where the sun don't shine.

What is this RAM stuff anyway?

RAM stands for Random Access Memory. RAM is faster, more expensive memory than the conventional stuff. When you're running a bit of software it uses RAM to temporarily hold frequently used parts of the program and data so it can shovel it all back into the processor quicker than if it has to go searching for it on your hard disk all over again. Clever stuff, RAM.

The more RAM you have, the more data it can juggle like this, and having big wads of RAM makes a thumping great performance difference.

How much is "enough"?

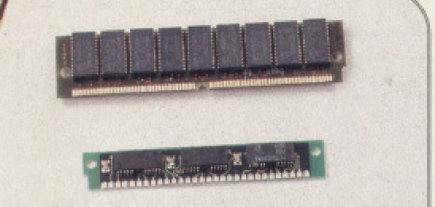
New PCs usually come with 4Mb of RAM (AKA 'four megs', in anorak-speak). Any less and Windows 3.1 will just laugh at you, new applications will stare at you in disbelief, and you'll find that the latest games from the likes of Origin, LucasArts and co. stalk off in disgust. Life's like that.

But even 4Mb is starting to look a bit scrawny, these days so if you can afford it your best bet is to jump straight to 8Mb. You could go further, it just depends on how deep your pockets are — it doesn't make you a better person.

What does it look like?

RAM comes in various guises, but by far the most common are SIMMs (Single In-line Memory Modules). These are flat, finger-length circuit boards with dinky little memory chips mounted on them. There are two main types: 30-pin SIMMs and 72-pin SIMMs.

SIMMs come in an assortment of sizes, from cheapo 256k chips up to excruciatingly expensive 64Mb jobs. They also come in a variety of speeds: usually 70, 80 or 90 nanoseconds (the seventies are the quickest).



Know your SIMMs! The one at the top is a 72-pin SIMM, while the one below is a 30-pin SIMM. Easy...

The rules of the game

- **Rule One:** You should never mix different speed SIMMs.
- **Rule Two:** With 30-pin SIMMs you need to fill the entire bank with the same size SIMMs. So if you've got four slots in a bank, you could put four 1Mb SIMMs in, or four 4Mb SIMMs and so on.
- **Rule Three:** 72-pin SIMMs can be mixed with others, and you don't need to fill an entire bank. 72-pin SIMMs are usually the larger denominations.

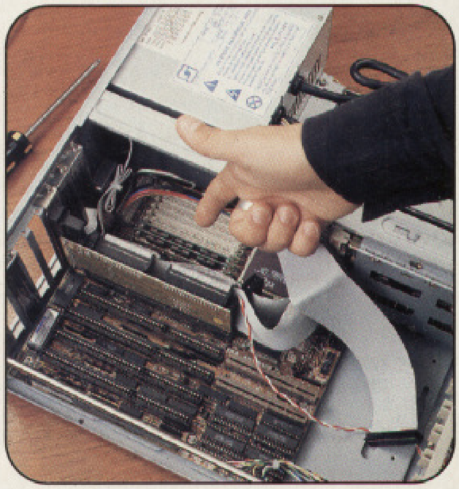
The step-by-step bit

Part One: Locating the enemy

In a perfect world, it would say in your PC's manual what kind of memory it uses. Fat chance, though, since most PC manuals are about as useful as a, well, PC manuals.

So, the first thing to find out is what you've got. And the only way to do that is stick your head inside your PC (please don't interpret that bit too literally). We've done this bit before: turn off the PC, undo the screws at the back, and slide off the case.

This time, you're looking for a bank of SIMM sockets on the motherboard. What you need to know is this: whether they're either 30- or 72-pin chips (count them...), their speed (70, 80 or 90ns — you'll find it written on the side of the chip) and how many free slots you've got.



Part Two: The expensive bit

Having decided how many new SIMMs you need, and in what denomination, ring round some computer shops to get the best price on what you want. Prices depend on whether anybody's set fire to a silicon-chip factory in the Far East recently — but usually £30 a megabyte is fair.

Next? Well, travel to said software shop, hand over the dosh and try not to lose, sit on or eat your SIMMs on the way home.

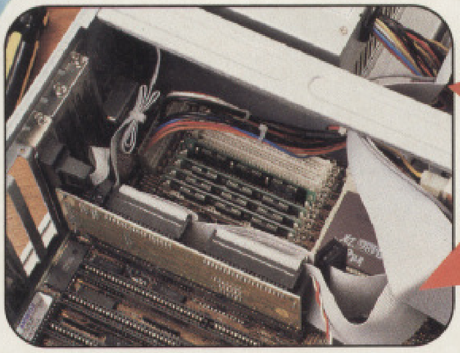
ANDOVER
train Spotting

Part Three: How to take a SIMM out...

We'll assume you left your PC open for the duration of the shopping expedition, and are now looking at your PC's exposed motherboard. SIMMs have a simple clip at each end. Lever these back gently with something like a flat bladed screwdriver. You should now be able to lean the chip back slightly till it's clear of the clips, then lift it out.

Part Four: ...And how to put one in

Put the chip against the slot at a slight angle. Push it upright and it should pop in to place as the clips take hold. If you've got it facing the wrong way it won't clip in place. Repeat ad nauseam — or until you've filled up the bank. Job done. Really, that's all there is to it.



Part Five: Work, you bast...

Okay, so you've gone through all this aggravation and when you replace the case and restart the thing it doesn't recognise the new memory.

Hey, it's a PC. What did you expect?

But before you lose your rag completely, there are two things to do. First, check that you've fitted the SIMMs firmly in place. If necessary, take them back out and refit them.

Next you need to check your CMOS (no, I don't know what it stands for and, no, it's not rude). The CMOS is where you'll find the basic settings for your PC. How you get into this varies from PC to PC: it can be DEL at boot up, it can be CTRL+ALT+ESC, CTRL+ALT+F1, or whatever. Unless your PC manual is a completely festering lump of the unmentionable, it will tell you these magic words. Honest.

When you get to the CMOS screen you will be able to see whether the memory is registering at this level. If it isn't, you may have to manually enter the new amount. Remember 1Mb is actually 1,024k — so enter it in multiples of 1,024.

And that's it — you should now be the owner of a fully RAMmed up machine!

IS THIS YOU?

No friends... No girl... No life... Just because you've got no memory. You forget names, addresses and birthdays — even your own — which makes you unpopular, unattractive and socially unacceptable. And you probably smell too.

WE CAN HELP!

Yes, this could be you in just four weeks time. Our patented memory course will quickly and easily give you the brain of a genius. To find out more, send $50 (no checks please) to: Dr Spanner, 100 Easy Street, Rakingitin, Berks.

Other types of **RAM**

SIMMs are the most common RAM chips these days, but you may also come across SIPs — which look like SIMMs only with spiky connctors — and DRAM which are thumbnail-sized black chips with little legs either size. You can change and add either of these types of chip, just be very careful not to break the connectors in the process.

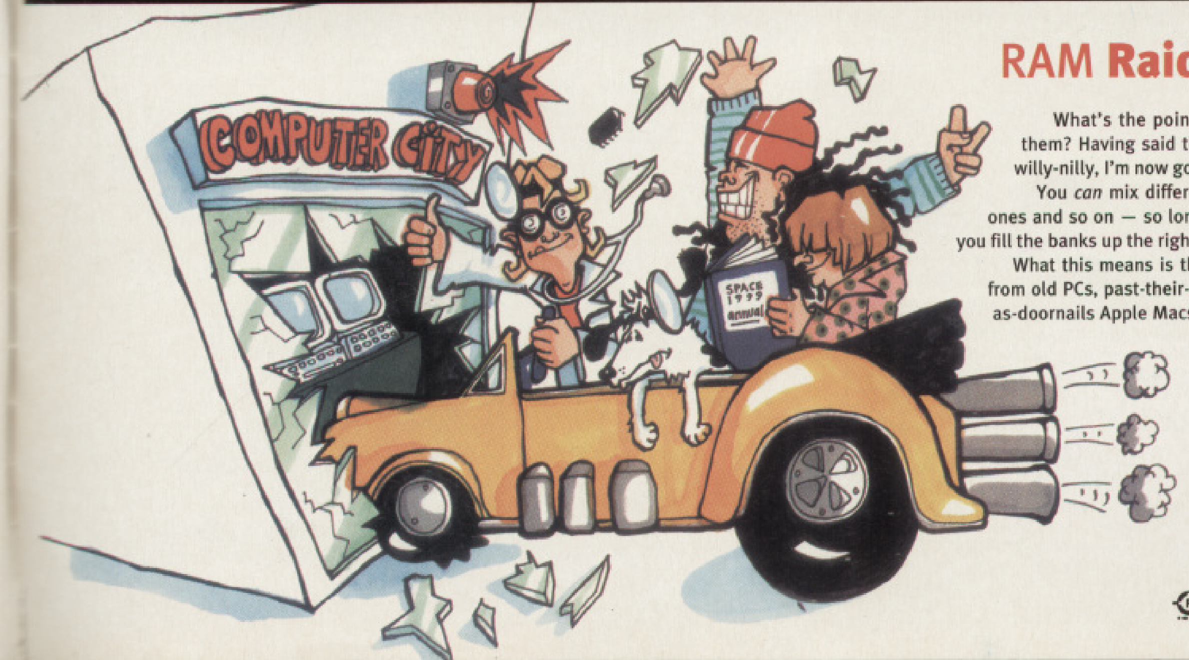
RAM **Raiding**

What's the point of having rules if you can't break them? Having said that you can't mix and match SIMMs willy-nilly, I'm now going to tell you exactly the opposite.

You *can* mix different makes of SIMMs, old ones, new ones and so on — so long as they're all the same speed and you fill the banks up the right way.

What this means is that you can go graverobbing SIMMs from old PCs, past-their-sell-by-date printers and even dead-as-doornails Apple Macs if you have to. Just rip out anything that looks vaguely like a RAM chip, run off before anyone notices and and give it a go in your PC.

It may work, it may not, it's going to be a trial and error job all the way, but for every 1Mb SIMM you can raid you're saving yourself around about £30 a time, which is almost the price of a new game. Remember: Every little helps...



The complete guide to game jargon

Say goodbye to games-ignorance blues with our fab-tastic jargon buster-style thing! It's handier than something with lots of hands!

ADVENTURE
Adventures were among the earliest form of computer game and were originally text-only. Messages on the screen told you where you were and what you could see, and you played the game by typing in basic English commands such as GET JEWEL AND GO WEST. The closest we have to adventures nowadays are the *graphic adventures* and *RPGs*, where on-screen *characters* explore worlds under *icon* control. The basic concept hasn't changed much, however.

ARCADE GAME
An action game, often based upon a *scenario* taken from the amusement arcades, in which you control an on-screen character, space ship or other entity. Scoring is an important element of arcade games, usually accomplished by shooting aliens, reaching higher levels, collecting treasure or whatever. Reflexes, rather than brainpower, are the key to success.

ATTRIBUTES
Usually refers to '*character* attributes' — the particular skills enjoyed by a character in an RPG. Examples are strength, magic power and dexterity. Attribute levels are normally determined before you start play through a combination of chance and choice. Once you start playing, your *characters* increase their scores for each attribute as they grow in experience, enabling them to tackle more demanding situations.

BACKGROUNDS
Graphic backdrops in *arcade games* against which the action takes place. See also *parallax* scrolling.

BUDGET GAMES
Games normally retail for £30 or more. Older titles (or compilations thereof), however, are frequently released 'on budget' at a fraction of their original cost.

CD-ROM
An acronym for Compact Disk Read-Only Memory; a CD with a game on it instead of Nirvana. A CD-ROM can hold up 600Mbs of data, giving ample space for enhanced game graphics and sound. The most striking use of all this space is to store and display compressed video and films on your PC. The latest industry-standard compression systems can hold just over 70 minutes *of full-motion* video on a single CD.

CHARACTER
Characters in games may be under your direct control or looked after by the computer. You can often talk to them, fight with them, even fall in love with them. As a general rule, however, characters are there either as obstacles or as oracles. Treat them accordingly.

CLONE
As in 'Space Invaders clone'. A game that blatantly copies the style of another release. Sadly, plagiarism is common in the games industry, though less so than in the early 80s when almost all games were 'clones' of Japanese coin-ops.

COIN-OP
A game designed for play on a coin-operated unit in an amusement arcade. A coin-op *conversion* is a coin-op *scenario* adapted for play on a PC. Almost all coin-ops are *arcade games*, though some companies have experimented with simulators and others with puzzle games.

CONTROL OPTIONS
Most games provide alternative means of controlling the action — some people prefer using a joystick, some a mouse, some the keyboard. The more control options, the better.

CONVERSION
The re-programming of a game so that it will run on a different computer. The quality of conversion varies — just because a game was a success on the Amiga doesn't mean that it will be as enjoyable on the PC.

DATA DISK
Some games are designed to accept additional *scenarios*. Once you've played through the main story, you can purchase a data disk with a new challenge. Data disks are used in conjunction with the original disks and cost less than buying a new game.

DISK ACCESS
Games need to access lots of information during play. This information is taken from disk but can be stored in memory for faster access. Poor program design, however, may require frequent disk accesses, slowing down the game.

END-OF-LEVEL GUARDIAN
Many *shoot-'em-ups* require you to defeat a particularly hostile enemy at the end of each level.

FLICK-SCREEN SCROLLING
The opposite of *scrolling*. When you move your game figure to the left of the display, the program clears the screen and replaces it with a new display, showing the adjacent location.

FRAME RATE
The speed at which the display is updated. As in cinema, a speed of around 15 frames per second is the slowest frame rate at which action on the screen appears smooth. Games which present complex 3D displays rarely reach this figure; arcade games, with simpler 2D graphics, often exceed it.

GAME ENGINE
The core program that controls a given game's major functions. For example, TFX stunning images are generated by a '3D game engine'.

GRAPHIC ADVENTURE
Now one of the most popular forms of computer entertainment. A map is divided into graphic locations and you can see your *character* moving about in response to your commands. Similar to an *arcade game*, but gameplay revolves around puzzle-solving and there are many more commands available. A good example would be LucasArts' Day Of The Tentacle or Sam & Max.

GOD GAME
A generic term for games that simulate complex environments incorporating social, economic and ecological systems, such as the recent smash hit Sim City 2000.

GOURAUD SHADING
This is a way of 'smoothing out' the colour transition across polygons and thus giving a more natural, rounded look to otherwise blocky and rectangular 3D objects.

ICONS
Graphic symbols on-screen that enable you to control the action by clicking on them with the mouse. For example, clicking on a icon with a hand illustrated on it may result in picking up an object.

INTERACTIVE FICTION
Fancy words for *adventure*, used by people who are too ashamed to admit that they play games.

INTERACTIVE MOVIE
Grandiose term applied by games publishers to products they wish to sell more copies of. If such a thing could ever truly exist, it would require gargantuan amounts of storage for all the graphics information.

INVENTORY
List of objects 'held' by the player's *character* during a game.

LEVELS
Usually found in *arcade games*, where the action is divided into successive yet independent phases.

LICENSE
Many publishers seek higher sales by acquiring licenses to well-known names in other media, i.e. Indiana Jones, James Bond, The Terminator, etc. Unfortunately, the cost of the license often means that the development of the game suffers due to lack of funds. May also apply (as in `coin-op license') to the *conversion of a coin-op* game to the PC, say Mortal Kombat, for example.

LOCATION
In adventures the game-world is split up into small areas. The 'current location' is the player's position in the game.

NPC
Short for Non-Player Character and refers to any *character* in a game that is controlled by the computer, not by you.

PARALLAX SCROLLING
Scrolling technique which layers the background of the display according to its imagined distance from the player. Each layer is then scrolled at a different speed, giving a more realistic impression of 'depth' into the screen. In a racing game, for example, the trees beside the road will flash by, but the mountains in the distance will remain almost stationary, just as in real life.

PARTY
Role-playing games (RPGs), popularised by the American board-game Dungeons & Dragons, involve a group of players who each assume a 'role' in the adventure (e.g. that of a warrior or thief). This group is known as a party.

PIXEL
A corrupted truncation of 'picture element'. A pixel describes the tiny coloured dots that together form a monitor's display.

PLATFORM GAME
A common gameplay style, in which the display is divided up into platforms. The player must therefore master the skills of jumping from one platform to another without falling between them and avoid both patrolling monsters and other obstacles. Recent examples are Fire & Ice and Zool.

PLAYABILITY
That magic quality which separates the turkeys from the rest of the flock, this refers to a combination of control method, game mechanics, graphics, sound and originality, all of which conspire to make a game enjoyable to play.

POLYGON
The basic building block for games which depict the action in 3D. Unlike sprites, which are pre-drawn images stored in memory, polygon-based objects are drawn and redrawn several times a second by the computer according to their angle and distance to the viewer.

POWER-UP
A bonus awarded to the player, especially during *shoot-'em- ups*, which results in enhanced game ability (e.g. jumping higher or more powerful weapons). Power-ups are frequently represented on-screen as objects that you have to collect.

RAY TRACING
3D graphics technology that involves the calculation of light patterns on surfaces, thus adding realism. See *rendering*.

RENDERING
Once a 3D artist has constructed a model of a particular object or scene (group of objects), he then defines light sources, texture maps and other criteria. Finally, the scene is rendered: a lengthy process that calculates light paths and reflections and their interaction with textures, surface angles, etc, creating a final image that is often photo-realistic.

ROLE-PLAYING GAME (RPG)
Game style which combines the elements of an *adventure* game with the multiple player-character approach of boardgames like Dungeons & Dragons *(see party)*. In the computer version, the party of friends is replaced by a party of computer-controlled characters, which you either recruit within the game or create before you start.

SCENARIO
The storyline, environment and objectives of a game. Additional scenarios for use with a game may sometimes be purchased on *data disks*.

SCROLLING
Refers specifically to the scrolling of the display or background in a game. There are three types: 'horizontal scrolling', which moves the image from side to side, most often used in *arcade games* where the character runs along the ground; 'vertical scrolling', where the screen image moves from top to bottom, often used in *shoot-'em-ups* where the aliens descend from above; and 'multi-directional scrolling' where the display constantly moves to reveal new areas, whatever direction you are moving in.

SHOOT-'EM-UP
A classic game genre in which you shoot everything that moves. If it doesn't move, you shoot it until it does.

SIMULATION
Applies to any game that attempts to replicate the workings of a 'real world' situation or vehicle, such as IndyCar Racing or Falcon 3.0.

SPRITE
A mobile graphic element: an alien, for example, or the player character itself as it moves around. Most sprites get shot.

STATE OF THE ART
Anything that looks good this month.

STATUS PANEL
Area of the screen giving information about your character's health, the environment or other game features.

STRATEGY
Game-style often dependent on the management of resources, as the player attempts to control an organisation, situation or environment.

TEXTURE MAPPING
Polygon-based objects look more realistic if each surface is shaded with a pattern, giving some indication of the surface's texture: rough, smooth, shiny and so on. These patterns are stored as 'texture maps'.

VOXEL SPACING
A programming technique employed for drawing detailed, realistic 3D landscapes, as seen in games such as Commanche: Maximum Overkill and CyberRace. The only drawback is that the results can look a touch 'blocky' and blurred at times.

The name's Erskine. Christina Erskine.
And if you've got a technical problem,
I've got a not-so- technical solution.
That's why they call me...

THE *TROUBLE SHOOTER*

This month, it's Puzzled from Port Talbot with the questions: "I keep coming across instructions to 'Make a boot disk' in magazines and games manuals. What, may I ask, is a boot disk when it's at home? And why 'boot?'".

I'll answer your last question first, Puz. To 'boot' your PC means to load up the operating system and all that start-up gubbins. So the process between switching the PC on and seeing your *C:>* prompt is the booting up.

A-ha, so a boot disk is a disk that does all that for you...

Yes, a boot disk, or 'system disk' if you want to be completely formal, is a floppy disk which holds the system files for MS-DOS (that's your operating system). Instead of booting up from the version of MS-DOS on your hard drive, you boot up from this floppy disk.

Er, great. Why on earth would I want to do that?

Boot disks come in handy if you're trying to play a game that needs a lot of system memory to be free, or needs a special configuration. If you try to load a game and keep getting error messages such as "Not enough memory" then a boot disk is a handy way of circumventing the problem, without having to delve too deeply into the mysteries of *CONFIG.SYS* and *AUTOEXEC.BAT*.

So what does a boot disk do that the operating system on my hard disk doesn't?

The start-up files on your hard disk probably give you a full-blown configuration: mouse drivers, soundcard parameters, disk caches, loading up DOS shell, the full Monty. And some or all of these will get in the way when you try to load something that needs, say, over 600K of free memory. A boot disk contains just the barest minimum of necessary start-up files, so you should get oodles of free memory.

Alright, alright, you've sold me on this one. What do I do to make this thing work?

Take a blank, formatted floppy disk. Put it into your disk drive. Now, at the *C:>* prompt, type

```
SYS A: [Enter]
```

Suppose I haven't got a formatted disk?

Then take a brand new, unformatted disk, put it in your disk drive and type

```
FORMAT A: /S [Enter]
```

at the *C:>* prompt. Either way, the three system start-up files that you need to boot the PC will be copied over to the floppy disk.

Nope. I've just typed *DIR* and it says only one file was copied. Something called *COMMAND.COM*.

Actually I can assure you that there are three files on that floppy disk now. There's *COMMAND.COM*, and files called *IO.SYS* and *MSDOS.SYS*.

Look, I just told you, I've done a *DIR* and there's only *COMMAND.COM*.

The *.SYS* files *are* there. You just can't see them, because they're what MS-DOS calls 'hidden' files. They're designed to be invisible.

But why should I have files I can't see, that pretend they're not there?

Because they are special system files, without which your PC can't start up at all. By labelling them as 'hidden' they are protected so that you can't delete them by accident (even if you type the dreaded *DEL *.**, it won't delete hidden files).

Is that it, then? Have I just made a boot disk?

Indeed you have. In fact, the first thing I'd do now is to get a sticky label, and write BOOT DISK on it in indelible ink. If you switch your PC off, put your freshly labelled boot disk in your drive A: (your main floppy disk drive) and switch the PC on again, you should see the floppy drive light come on and at the end of it all you should have a prompt on-screen that says *A:>*, instead of *C:>*.

However, this is the PC we're talking about here, and so of course there are complications lurking round the corner and just waiting to catch you out.

I've just found one... I can load up this game okay now, but now I can't use the mouse.

Yes, you see there's nothing in those three system files on the floppy disk that says anything about a mouse. Your mouse driver, which is the file that tells MS-DOS that there's a mouse connected to your system, usually gets loaded in by the *AUTOEXEC.BAT* file.

So I'm stuffed?

Not at all. In fact, there are two solutions. One is to start up from the boot disk, then type *C:* [Enter] to get to the *C:>* prompt, and load your mouse separately. Often, the mouse driver file is called *MOUSE.COM* and it sits in a directory called *MOUSE*, in which case type

```
MOUSE\MOUSE [Enter]
```

to load it up. (Technology's wonderful, isn't it? You spend all this money on a computer, and then you have to type in things like MOUSEY-MOUSEY to get it to work.)

The second solution is to copy your old *AUTOEXEC.BAT* file to the floppy disk, by typing

```
COPY AUTOEXEC.BAT A: [Enter]
```

at the *C:>* prompt. Then type

```
EDIT A:\AUTOEXEC.BAT [Enter]
```

also at the *C:>* prompt. Copy it over first, then edit it. Now, with the version of *AUTOEXEC.BAT* from the boot disk on-screen, remove all the lines you don't need for the boot disk (if you press Ctrl-Y, you delete one line at a time, instead of just one character at a time).

In this case, the only line you need is the one which mentions the word MOUSE. Everything else can go. For other games, you might need to leave in the lines that relate to your soundcard, but take out anything irrelevant.

(Incidentally, it's possible your mouse driver file is called *MOUSE.SYS*, in which case it will be in *CONFIG.SYS*, not *AUTOEXEC.BAT*. In that case, don't worry, just copy across the *CONFIG.SYS* file and edit that instead.)

Now save the file (Alt-F, S), then exit (Alt-F, X). Now, you have a boot disk which also loads your mouse. Sorted!

Wait, wait, you said there was more than one complication. Lurking, you said.

Oh yes. Making a boot disk works on most PCs because the start-up system looks for the operating system first on drive A: (the floppy disk), then on drive C: (the hard disk).

So when you put a boot disk in, it looks on drive A:, finds the start-up files and loads the minimal version of DOS. Some PCs, however, are set up to look first on drive C:. If your boot disk doesn't work, this might be why.

You can usually change the configuration to look on A: first in your C-MOS set-up. Now I don't propose to explain what the C-MOS is right now, except to say that it's a set of start-up lists that take effect even before MS-DOS gets loaded. To change it, you'll need to get into C-MOS.

Now how you do that varies from PC to PC, but usually you press ESC, or a key combination such as Ctrl-Alt-Esc during the time that the PC is starting up — before you see the *C:>* prompt. Check your documentation for details.

There should be on-screen prompts explaining how to change the start-up parameters in C-MOS. *Don't* start experimenting with disk drives, just look for the line which starts 'Start-up', 'Load', or 'Boot', and says C: after it. This you'll need to change to A:.

Save, exit, and reset... and *now* you should be sorted!

Another day, another soul out of torment. If you've got a problem with your PC that needs a spot of troubleshooting, drop me a line and we'll talk it through. And when I'm not being the Troubleshooter, I've got a day job as editor of PC REVIEW, sister magazine to the very wonderful PC GAMES. PC REVIEW covers the whole gamut of PC entertainment and includes a Technical Help section, in which you can find more detailed versions of the articles which appear in this section.

WIN! Your ow

Cripes! We've got a fantastic Hitachi CinemaSound TV to give away in this amazing Inferno compo, all thanks to the boundless generosity of Ocean!

Going to the flicks isn't much fun, is it? Well, I don't think so, anyway.

For a start you have to pay an arm and a leg to get in, only to find that the screen is roughly the size of a postcard and the seats have all the comfort of a large, rusty spike.

And then you have to sit through a load of god-awful adverts for Bacardi and Gordon's Gin and Southern Comfort and... I mean, what *is* the point — if you wanted a drink you'd have gone to the pub, wouldn't you?

And then, just a few minutes after the film has started, about forty people pile in and annoy everyone by blocking the view of the screen as they stumble clumsily about, trying to find their seats in the inky blackness.

And then some loud-mouthed idiots sitting just behind you start yakking on about what they did last Saturday or who they saw down the shops, and you haven't got the guts to tell them to shut up because they sound quite hard.

And then, just as the film reaches its climax, someone down your row gets up to go to the loo, so you miss all the action as they shuffle oh-so-slowly past, treading on your toes in the process.

And then... Well, and then you start wishing that you'd saved yourself the bother — and the money — and just stayed at home. But, let's face it, it's not quite the same watching Jurassic Park on a 14" black-and-white portable, is it?

TELLY-TASTIC!

But soon one lucky reader will be able to bring the big movie experience home.

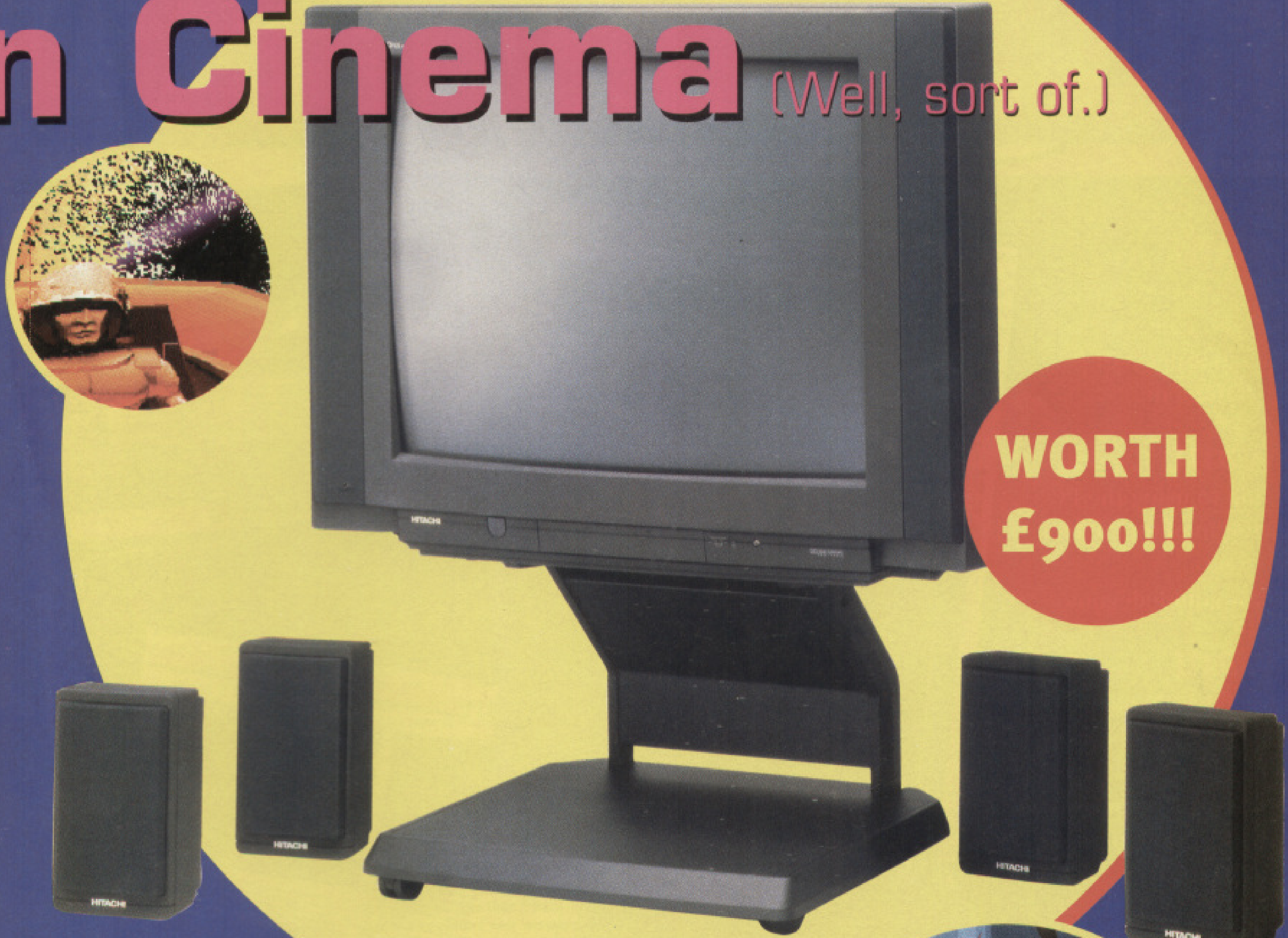
Yes, Ocean are so excited about Inferno, their incredible 3D space sim, that they've decided to stump up enough cash for us to give away a smart Hitachi CinemaSound television. The link? Well, you'll no doubt watch Star Wars or Aliens or some other Science Fiction epic on it at some point. Probably.

Anyway, forget the tenuous game/prize connection, just be glad it's up for grabs. Take our word for it, the Hitachi CinemaSound C2874TN (to give it its full, if rather dull, title) is the movie buff's dream come true, and will instantly transform anyone's front room into the front row.

The C2874TN's massive 28" screen produces a bright, pin-sharp picture of unparalleled clarity and realism, and the amazing 3D sound generated by its built-in Dolby Surround Pro-Logic amplifier and four speakers will make you think that you're actually IN the movie, not just watching it.

All in all, the Hitachi CinemaSound C2874TN is the most advanced home entertainment system available today. And boy, are we going to be jealous of the lucky person who wins it.

n Cinema (Well, sort of.)



WORTH £900!!!

HOW TO *ENTER*

We were going to create a clever wordsearch puzzle or a cryptic crossword for you to solve. But frankly, it's getting late and we really can't be bothered. So we've fallen back on that old favourite, the multiple-choice question.

All you have to do is read the three questions below and then choose the correct answer for each from the three provided. You should then write them down on the back of an postcard or sealed envelope which coincidentally bears your name and address. So if, for example, you think the answer to Question 1 is 'The Diddy Men', then write 1 (a) on your entry.

When you've answered all the questions to the best of your abilities, send your entry in to us at: Hot! Hot! Hot! Compo, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

All entries must reach us by the 2nd of October 1994 when the winner will be drawn from an old cathode ray tube, or something else amusingly TV-related.

ANSWER ME *THIS...*

1. Who wrote Inferno? Was it...
   - **(a) The Diddy Men**
   - **(b) Digital Image Design**
   - **(c) David Braben and Ian Bell**
2. What is the name of the evil alien race in Inferno? Is it...
   - **(a) The Krell**
   - **(b) The Vogons**
   - **(c) The Rexxons**
3. Inferno's developers wrote another 3D space game a couple of years back. What was its name?
   - **(a) Epic**
   - **(b) Wing Commander**
   - **(c) Galaxians In 3D**

This competition is not open to employees of EMAP Images, their relatives or their friends — which is a pity, because you can't *imagine* how much Dave the Editor wants one of these things. The competition closes on the 2nd of October 1994, and the winners will be notified shortly afterwards. No alternative prizes will be offered. The Editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. While every care is taken, we cannot accept any responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post.

PC REVIEW

I want ...

an easy-to-read, no-nonsense magazine covering all aspects of PC entertainment.

I want ...

a guide to using the PC written in plain English, not some techno-gobbledegook.

I want ...

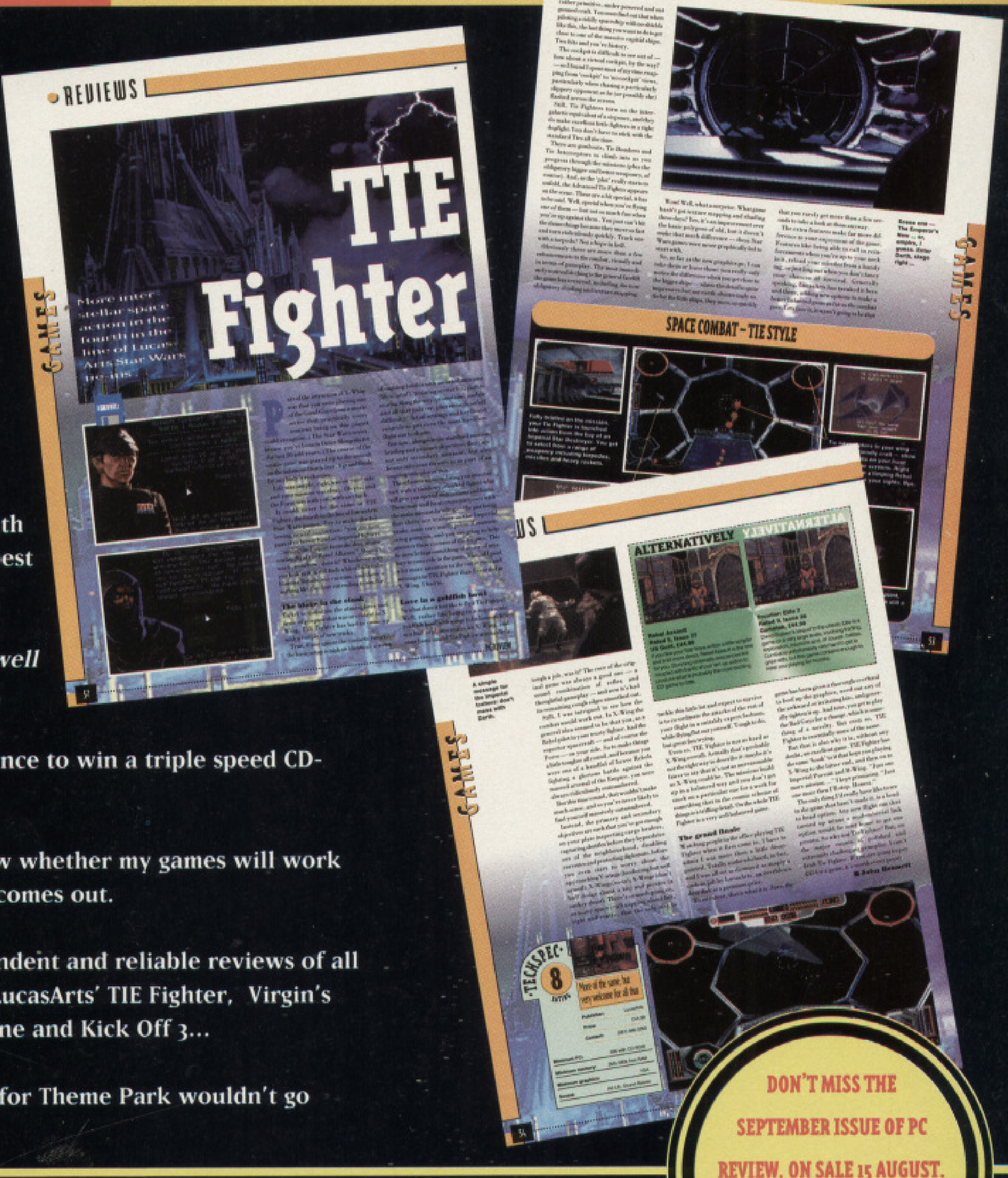
a free CD-ROM packed with over 600Mb of the very best CD-ROM-based demos including Infogrames' Shadow of the Comet *as well as* an HD disk.

I want ... the chance to win a triple speed CD-ROM drive from NEC.

I want ... to know whether my games will work with Windows 4 when it comes out.

I want ... independent and reliable reviews of all the latest games such as LucasArts' TIE Fighter, Virgin's Overlord, The Chaos Engine and Kick Off 3...

Oh, and some handy tips for Theme Park wouldn't go amiss either.



DON'T MISS THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF PC REVIEW. ON SALE 15 AUGUST. PLACE AN ORDER WITH YOUR NEWSAGENT NOW!

Let PC Review grant your wishes. The September issue has all this and more! Are sophisticated sound cards all they're cracked up to be? What CD-ROM drives will be on the market in a year's time? And you'll find out which games are set to take the PC World by storm this autumn. Only PC Review has the answers.

PC REVIEW – YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO PC ENTERTAINMENT

GOT something you want to get off your chest? Then write to Dave, that Editor bloke, at: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Alternatively, you can Fax him on: 071 972-6710. And remember, if you're picked as the Star Letter, you'll win £50!

Letters

Starletter

STRONG ENOUGH FOR YOU? £50 Winner!

Dear PC GAMES,

I don't know what Neil Hopkins is talking about when he says there should be more adult games on the PC [Letters, last issue]. Has he ever played any of the recent Ultima games?

The central character, the Avatar, is supposed to be extremely virtuous, so you have to think very carefully before you make any decisions in the game. Ultima VII covered murder, pollution, racism, drug abuse, the dangers of joining religious cults and deforestation, to mention but a few of its themes.

Gabriel Knight is another adult-themed game, and after going through all sorts of testing experiences (including the deaths and near-deaths of loved ones) the hero becomes a morally better person.

As for political games, there are already plenty of these around already, and if you want to get ecological, there's Sim Earth.

If Mr Hopkins finds the games he's playing are too immature, he ought to read games reviews more carefully, because there are more than enough adult games around to satisfy anyone.

B. M. Sherwood,
Bath, Avon.

OUTRAGE! *OUTRAGE!*

Dear PC GAMES,

Heresy! Your Imp column, "Doom is crap!" made me seethe. Unoriginal? Repetitive? Deeply flawed?! How can you say that about the best game to appear in the last two years?

Okay, Doom may not be the most original game ever created — the concept's not that much different from Wolfenstein, after all — but then there aren't all that many original games anyway (as you admit in an article in the same issue).

And repetitive? No more than any other game. Take a look at any platform game (boing, leap, splat the cuddly monster, grab the bonus, boing), shoot-'em-up (shoot, dodge the bullets, shoot, grab the bonus), role-playing game (trudge trudge, speak to the NPC, solve the puzzle, trudge, defeat the evil Arch Wizard Morgon of Thraal and rescue the sacred runestone of the Temple of Antimacassar)... Need I go on?

As for being deeply flawed, don't be stupid! Doom looks great, sounds brilliant (don't you love that splatting sound as you hit something with a neatly-aimed rocket?) and there's plenty to do: exploring, solving the odd puzzle and, let us not forget, killing things in a highly gratuitous manner.

Besides, Doom is *the* best multiplayer game around, despite what you say about The Chaos Engine. There's nothing quite as satisfying as ambushing one of your friends with a rocket launcher, or indulging in a bit of chainsaw jousting. I can't get through a day without my daily dose of Doom. It's quite simply the best game ever.

Gary Chambers,
Steyning, West Sussex.

Calm down, Gaz! As we say in the footnote to Imp's column, whatever that little devil spouts on about reflects his opinions, not ours. We love Doom. Really. Most of the letters we received in response to Imp's rantings echoed Gary's. However, not everybody disagreed with the red-skinned one's criticisms — although that's not to say they completely agreed with them either...

FUNNY

Dear PC GAMES,

After reading F. Millar's letter about making films of games in your last issue, I've got a got a suggestion. How about X-Wing: The Movie, starring Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker, Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia and Harrison Ford as Han Solo?

Graeme Lovell,
London.

Oh, my sides doth split.

DOOM *"NOT CRAP"*

Dear PC GAMES,

I was interested to read Imp's opinion about Doom. Doom isn't crap — it's a very good game, actually — but he's got a point. After you've completed it once, found all the secret rooms and killed all the demons, what's the point of doing it all again? The game engine isn't that original (Ultima Underworld was first in the multi-scrolling stakes), and there isn't really enough to do.

Killing things is all very well, but it would be nicer if you had some sub-objectives, such as destroying the spawning vats on one level or rescuing human hostages on another. Doom is really just a glorified shoot-'em-up, and I'm glad that someone has at last seen through the impressive graphics and gory sound effects. Let's hope that Doom 2 has a bit more to it.

Adrian Harrison,
Kingston Bagpuize, Oxon.

Too right, Adrian — the last thing we want from Doom 2 is an overpriced sequel that turns out to be little more than a data disk, containing just a handful of new weapons, levels and monsters...

"HE'S CUTE"

Dear PC GAMES,

Congratulations on an excellent magazine. I notice that you only come out every other month. Do you have any plans to go monthly?

Joanne Davis,
Poole, Dorset.

P.S. Does Dean Evans have a girlfriend? He's cute.

As you're probably aware by now, Joanne, we do indeed go monthly from the next issue, which will be available from all good newsagents on the 29th of September.

P.S. All you girls — and maybe some of the boys — will be pleased to learn that Dean is completely unattached at the moment. And Dave Kelsall asked me to tell you that so is he.

NO MORALS

Dear PC GAMES,

I've just read your latest issue and was interested by Neil Hopkins' letter on the subject of adult-oriented games. He seems to think that games need some sort of moral message before they can be deemed 'adult', but I'm not so sure.

The very purpose of computer games is to entertain you and make you forget your day-to-day hassles, not remind you of what a nasty place the world is by introducing such topics as AIDS, the ozone layer and famine. I'm all for educating people about these topics, but games are definitely the wrong medium.

I play games to cheer myself up, and just as I'd sooner watch Demolition Man than Philadelphia at the flicks, I'd rather play Doom or Sam & Max than some game about childbirth and 'personal relationships'.

In any case, just because a game has a message doesn't mean it's any good. Take Wrecked, a platform game aimed at educating drug users, and Alive Software's Christian game, Spiritual Warfare. Both were games with supposed 'messages' — and both were absolute rubbish.

Games, by their very nature, should be fun, so let's not get bogged down my morals and concentrate on quality instead.

Tim Russell,
Ely, Cambs.

GOODBYE DOS?

Dear PC GAMES,

Recently I've seen a lot of posters advertising an operating system called OS/2. My boss uses it at work on his PC and says it's much better than DOS, but I'm not sure I want to go out and spend money on it in case my games won't work with it. Do you know anything about it?

Terry Lewis,
Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

Hold it, Terry — don't move! OS/2 is a Windows-ish user interface but was never intended for the gamesplaying likes of you and me. If you buy it you'll find a lot — if not most — of your games won't work with it. For all its faults, you're better off sticking with DOS.

WHAT THE...!

Dear PC GAMES,

As an ex-Amiga owner, I have to admit that I'm completely incompetent when it comes to PCs. All this stuff about Expanded and Extended memory, base memory and, for heaven's sake, graphics card memory is doing my head in. Thank you for being one of the few magazines which doesn't assume that your readers know what goes on in the bowels of a PC.

I own a 486, and recently bought a multimedia upgrade kit or, in other words, a soundcard and a CD-ROM drive. Unfortunately I didn't have a clue about how to install it. Thanks to Dr Spanner's Casebook I've managed to get the soundcard in and — hey presto! — it actually works. Any chance that you can cover CD-ROMs in the next issue, because my PC's a jumble of wires inside and I don't want to touch anything in case I break it. Please?

Paul Harvey,
Colchester, Essex.

Glad to hear you're finding the good Doctor's advice useful, Paul. As for your CD drive plea, why not tune in next month, when he'll be covering that precise topic?

WHO CARES?

Dear PC GAMES,

Your "Are Original Games Dead?" feature really hit the nail on the head. All we seem to get these days are variations on a theme. Doom? Wolfenstein with better graphics. Theme Park? Sim City with roller coasters. The Chaos Engine? Gauntlet with guns — and in any case, it's already been out on the Amiga for ages. All these games are excellent, but none of them are true originals.

But I guess the point is, who really *cares?* If you enjoy the game, it doesn't really matter if there's nothing essentially new in it, which is why Origin, Sierra and the rest are busily churning out sequels. In any case, original doesn't necessarily mean good, otherwise Plumbers Don't Wear Ties wouldn't have scored a miserable 4%. I say if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Jeremy Green,
Keswick, Cumbria.

Agreed, 'Jez', but while it's a little unrealistic to expect *every* game to be overflowing with innovation, it would be nice to see more games trying to add a few twists to old formulae, like The Chaos Engine, rather than just regugitating the same old guff but with different graphics and sound.

PLAIN *UGLY*

Dear PC GAMES,

Thank you for providing me with an entertaining read. Your magazine is funny without being juvenile, and it's nice to see to see that you give games the marks they deserve rather than awarding everything at least 80% like some other PC magazines.

One thing though: is your designer colour blind? Your feature "Are Original Games Dead?" (interesting article, by the way) is a case in point. Red, green, purple, orange and mustard yellow do NOT look nice together, whatever anyone thinks. Trying to read it gave me a real headache, especially as the text didn't show up too well against the coloured backgrounds.

Please stick to good old back and white in future, or else stick a free pair of sun-glasses and a packet of Paracetamol to your cover next issue.

James McLeod,
Motherwell, Scotland.

When I showed this letter to Dave Kelsall, PC GAMES' Art Editor, he tutted, threw his head back, took a drag from his long-stemmed cigarette holder and then sighed "These proles, what do they know about... *Art?*"

NEXT MONTH

Yup, that's right — "Next Month"! As you'll probably have read elsewhere, PC GAMES will be 'coming at ya' on a regular monthly basis from now on.

And we're so excited about it all here at the PC GAMES office that we've hung balloons from our monitors, trailed brightly-coloured bunting between our PCs and put Abba's Greatest Hits on our CD drives — Dave Kelsall has even stopped doing his infuriatingly-noisy monkey impressions for five minutes.

And now we're going to get you in a party mood too by letting you in on just some of the ace goodies we've got lined up for the next issue, things like...

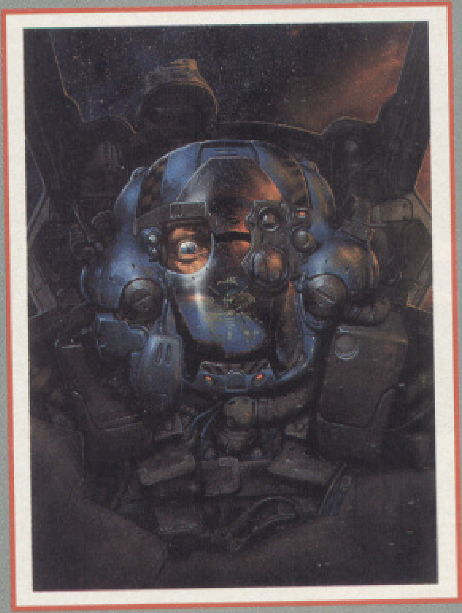
- **Retribution** — Gremlin reckons that its amazing-looking 3D space combat sim is in a league of its own. Find out for yourself as we take an EXCLUSIVE under-the-wraps peek...

- **Inside LucasArts** — We fly State-side to bring you a report from deep inside the world famous dream factory! We'll be talking to the creators of Dark Forces, Full Throttle, The Dig — and more...

- **Doom 2** — It's the game you're all waiting for. But is it really a true sequel or just Doom 1 with extra weapons, different monsters and new levels? Find out in our in-depth review!

- **Under A Killing Moon** — It's billed as a truly interactive movie, but we've all heard that before... Discover whether the finished game lives up to the hype in our full review!

- **System Shock** — Origin attempts to do the Doom thang with this 3D space adventure created by the blokes wot brought you Ultima Underworld! Review next issue!



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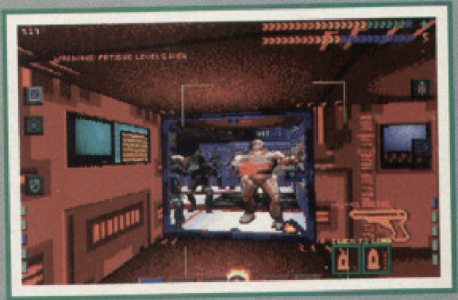
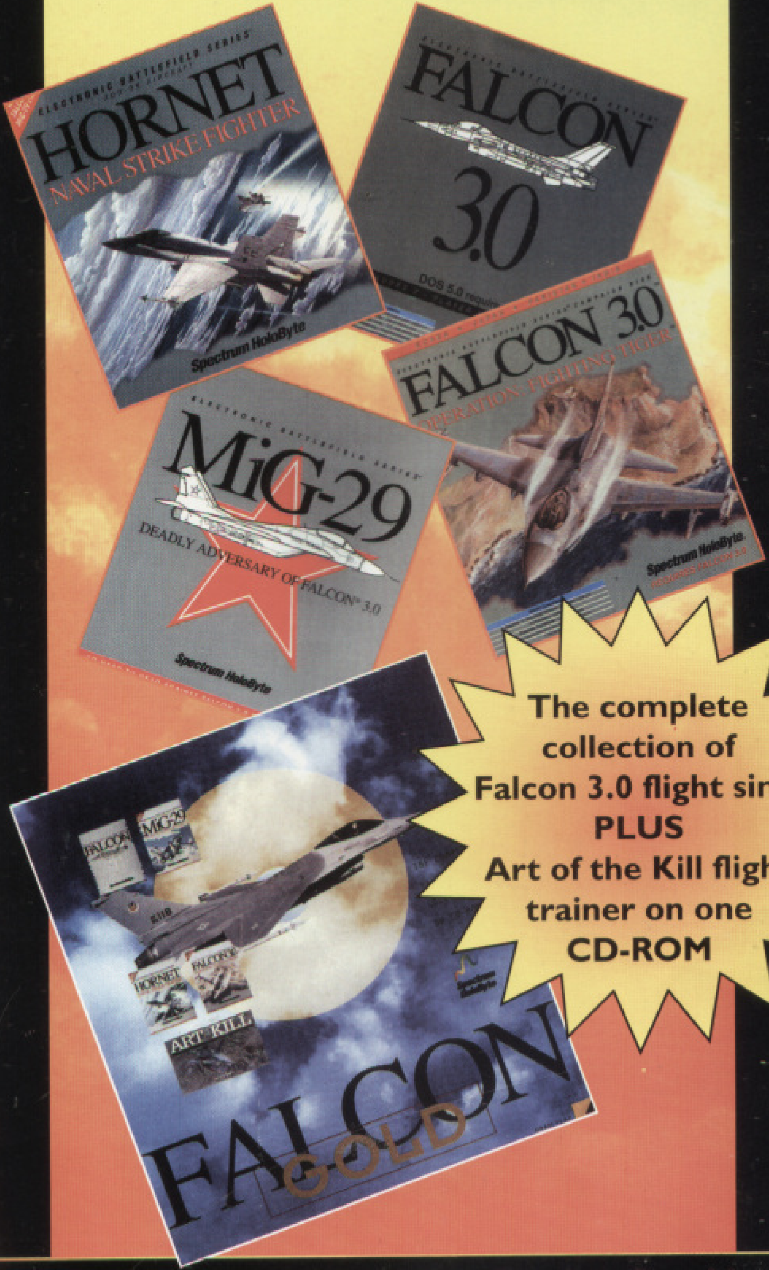


PLUS! Look out for something a little bit *special* on one of our two HD coverdisks...

PCGAMES

Where there's a party every month — and you're all invited!
November issue on-sale October 6th, *please bring a bottle.*

FALCON GOLD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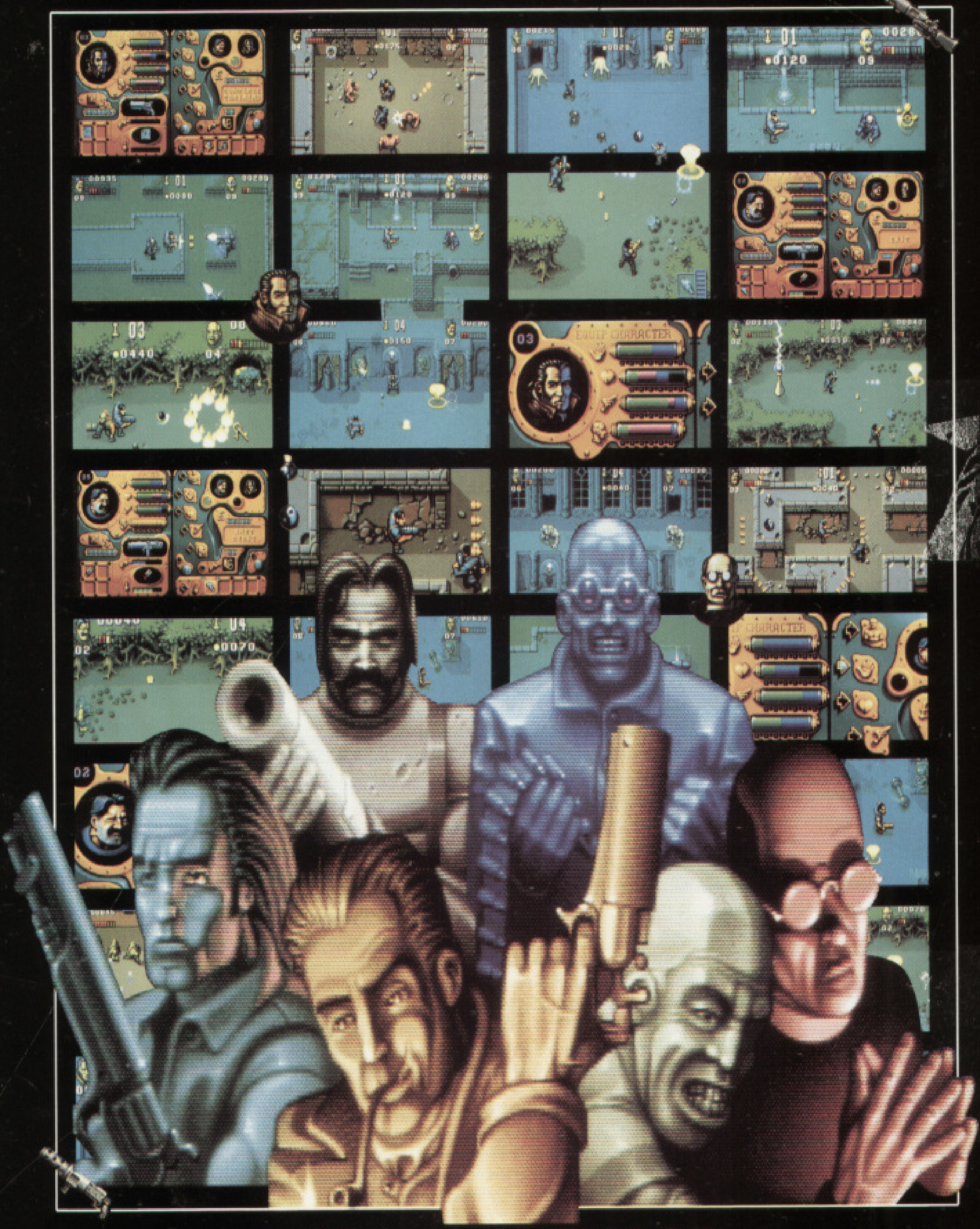

• TIME FOR CHAOS •

IBM PC screen shots shown.

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OCTOBER 1994

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